Augsburg College Library
3 0510 00963 3472

26174
54

DK
127
M72
v.2

26174

AUGSBURG COLLEGE AND SEMINARY
LIBRARY - MINNEAPOLIS 4, MINN.

AUGSBURG COLLEGE AND SEMINARY
LIBRARY - MINNEAPOLIS 4, MINN.

Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2026

https://archive.org/details/russiancourtinei0000fitz_n0b8

THE RUSSIAN COURT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY . . .

VOL. II

Catherine II Empress of Russia

AUGSBURG COLLEGE AND SEMINARY
LIBRARY - MINNEAPOLIS 4, MINN.

THE RUSSIAN COURT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

By FITZGERALD MOLLOY, Author of "The Romance of Royalty," "The Sailor King: His Court and His Subjects," &c.

WITH 2 PHOTOGRAVURE FRONTISPIECES AND
16 FULL-PAGE ILLUSTRATIONS ON ART PAPER

VOL. II

NEW YORK
CHARLES SCRIBNER'S SONS
153-157 FIFTH AVENUE
1905

Printed in Great Britain

LH
147
M72
v.2

CONTENTS

VOL. II

CHAPTER IX

PAGE

The arrogance and egotism of the Princess Daschkaw—She becomes troublesome and is requested to live at Moscow—The Empress writes to Prince Daschkaw—The favourite of the late Empress quits Russia—Illness of the King of Poland—Catherine desires to give the Crown of Poland to Poniatowski—An English Minister's description of Frederick the Great—The latter offers to support Poniatowski on the Polish throne—England refuses to accept payment of Catherine's debt—Poniatowski is elected King—Congratulations of the British Government—The Empress desires to make an Imperial progress through part of her empire—The English Ambassador has an interview with her Majesty—She sets out on her journey—A plot to place Prince Ivan on the throne—How it was carried out—A tragic ending to a conspiracy—The Empress fears she may be suspected of instigating it—The trial of Lieutenant Minovitch—His behaviour in prison—The British Ambassador advocates capital punishment—The early days of the Grand Duke—His personal appearance and character—D'Alembert refuses to act as his director—An English doctor invited to Russia to inoculate for small-pox—His handsome fees 319

26174

CHAPTER X

PAGE

Dissensions in Poland under its new King—Turkey is incited to make war on Russia—A plot to abduct or assassinate Poniatowski—Daring attempt in the streets of Warsaw—His Majesty is captured—The distress that befell him—Wandering through the night—An alarmed miller—Return of the King to Warsaw—The first dismemberment of Poland—Her Majesty's admiration for Gregory Orloff—His unfaithfulness and indifference—He resolves to restore order to plague-stricken Moscow—Assassination of an archbishop—Orloff's rewards—He attends a congress—His incompetency and splendour—An alarming letter is placed in his hand—Hurries back to St. Petersburg and is prevented from entering the capital—The new favourite—Gregory Orloff suddenly appears at Court—The Grand Duke's first marriage—His bride arrives in Russia—Her marriage and her death—The Grand Duke goes to Berlin and is entertained by Frederick the Great—The impression he made—Returns to Russia, whither he is followed by the Princess of Wurtemburg—Her marriage and progeny 355

CHAPTER XI

Catherine's difficult task—Her endeavours to civilise her subjects—She invites foreigners to Russia—Has translations made of famous works—Writes a code of instructions for the administration of the laws—She is flattered by Frederick the Great and by Voltaire—She employs the French philosopher—The beginnings of Friedrich Melchior von Grimm—He journeys to Russia and is received by the Empress—He returns to Paris and becomes a correspondent of Catherine's—Denis Diderot is brought to her Majesty's notice—She purchases his library and grants him a pension—He visits the Court of St. Petersburg—His intimate conversations

PAGE

with the Czarina—The purchase of Voltaire's library—The Empress collects famous pictures—The Hermitage—Her passion for building—Glimpses of her inner life—How her days were passed—The splendour of her Court—Masquerade balls—Dinners with her officers—Her evenings at the Hermitage—Ceremony is thrown overboard—A Court buffoon 402

CHAPTER XII

The Imperial favourite is discarded—Concerning Gregory Patiomkin—His daring mimicry of his Sovereign—He becomes the reigning favourite—Dreadful and repulsive in appearance—Her Majesty is captivated by him—Great riches and high posts are given him—He virtually governs the empire—Catherine's pious pilgrimage to the Troitza Monastery in the company of her lover—He plays an impressive part—The Empress is equal to the occasion—She returns to the capital followed by Patiomkin—He is forbidden the Court but suddenly appears there—The new favourite—Arrival at St. Petersburg of the English Ambassador, James Harris, afterwards Earl of Malmesbury—His description of the Court—The favourite upbraids the Sovereign—Gregory Orloff remonstrates—Patiomkin schemes—Her Majesty is once more fascinated—Her description of her new favourite—Her interview with Alexis Orloff—The favourite falls—His interesting successor—Her Majesty writes of him to Grimm—A tragic figure is seen at Court—The end of Gregory Orloff—Her Majesty loses her lover—Her bitter grief and her pathetic letters . 430

CHAPTER XIII

The Grand Duke Paul and his mother—They fear and dislike each other—The birth of Paul's first child Alexander—Paul's eccentric behaviour—His treatment of his wife—Dreads that she may plot against him—His conduct

PAGE

towards those around him—Love of soldiering—The Empress and her eldest grandson—She desires that the Grand Duke should travel—How her plans were carried out—Count Panin inspires him with dread—He wishes to remain in Russia—His farewell to the Court—Dispatches of the English Ambassador—The Empress finds a new favourite—She describes him to Grimm—His extravagance and her jealousy—His coldness causes bitter suffering to her Majesty—Patiomkin's scheme to get rid of him—A dramatic situation leads to his dismissal—The last of the favourites—The Crimea is annexed by Russia—Visited by Catherine—Extraordinary scenes prepared by Patiomkin—She meets her old lover Poniatowski—A second war between Russia and Turkey—Patiomkin returns to the capital—His love of splendour—He entertains the Czarina magnificently—His illness and death. . . 468

CHAPTER XIV

The amazing ambition of the reigning favourite—His levées attended by crowds of noble and distinguished sycophants—They court the attention of his pet monkey—Description of the Empress at this period—Her two eldest grandsons—Catherine secretly resolves to make Alexander her successor—Sends for German princesses that he and his brother may select wives—The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and her daughters—The final downfall of Poland brought about by the greed of her Majesty's lover—Insurrection of the Poles and gallant defence of their country—Thaddeus Kosciuszko leads the army—His bravery—Taken prisoner—Poniatowski is deposed and pensioned—Catherine desires her eldest granddaughter to marry the King of Sweden—His Majesty arrives at the Court of St. Petersburg and is splendidly received—The young couple meet and fall in love—He wishes the Grand Duchess to change her religion for

PAGE

his—The mistake of a frivolous Prime Minister—The Court assembles to witness the betrothal—Waiting for the bridegroom-elect—He refuses to appear—His dogged obstinacy—End of a painful scene—His interview with her Majesty and his departure from Russia—The future that awaited him and the Grand Duchess . 512

CHAPTER XV

Her Majesty's health—Her last evening at the Hermitage—Her sudden illness and its alarming consequences—Her death and Paul's succession—The first acts of his reign—The body of Peter III. is exhumed and watched over by his murderers and laid beside his wife—The Princess Daschkaw is banished—Her letter to the Czar and its consequences—The ex-King of Poland is summoned to St. Petersburg—He is treated kindly by Paul—His last days and his death—The Emperor visits and releases Thaddeus Kosciuszko and his fellow-prisoners—Rapid changes made by Paul—His war against round hats and his ridiculous orders—His capricious and eccentric conduct—His military ardour—Fears he is not treated with sufficient homage—Respect which the courtiers are ordered to exhibit to him—His dread of assassination—Its consequences to his subjects—Universal fear of the Imperial tyrant—He challenges the sovereigns of Europe—Evidences of his good-humour—A message from a madman . . . 547

CHAPTER XVI

The Emperor Paul is crowned at Moscow—He builds himself a fortified palace for his security—A rumour that enrages him—He quarrels with his wife and his mistress—Count Rostopchin's scheme—The reign of terror at the Court of St. Petersburg—The beginning of a conspiracy—Initiating the Grand Duke Alexander into its

PAGE

purpose—He is brought to approve of his father's dethronement—The Czar's suspicions and Count Pahlen's answer—Plato Zubof's supper to the conspirators — How they entered the Palace of St. Michael—A valet causes an alarm—His Imperial Majesty is found hidden behind a curtain—His abject terror—He prepares to sign his abdication—His strangulation and subsequent treatment—Alexander waits to hear news of the Czar's abdication—His horror on hearing of his father's death—His mother desires to become sovereign—Her ambition is laughed at—The fate of the conspirators 576

LIST OF ILLUSTRATIONS

VOL. II

CATHERINE II., EMPRESS OF RUSSIA (*Photogravure*)	*Frontispiece*
	Facing page
JAMES HARRIS, FIRST EARL OF MALMESBURY	330
CATHERINE II. ALEXIEFFNA	382
THE GRAND DUCHESS MARIA FEODOROVNA	398
GREGORY ALEXANDROWITZ PATIOMKIN	430
GENERAL LANSKOI	466
GUSTAVUS IV.	534
THE GRAND DUKE PAUL	550
THE EMPRESS ELIZABETH	578
THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER I.	592

THE RUSSIAN COURT IN THE EIGHTEENTH CENTURY

CHAPTER IX

The arrogance and egotism of the Princess Daschkaw—She becomes troublesome and is requested to live at Moscow—The Empress writes to Prince Daschkaw—The favourite of the late Empress quits Russia—Illness of the King of Poland—Catherine desires to give the Crown of Poland to Poniatowski—An English Minister's description of Frederick the Great—The latter offers to support Poniatowski on the Polish throne—England refuses to accept payment of Catherine's debt—Poniatowski is elected King—Congratulations of the British Government—The Empress desires to make an Imperial progress through part of her empire—The English Ambassador has an interview with her Majesty—She sets out on her journey—A plot to place Prince Ivan on the throne—How it was carried out—A tragic ending to a conspiracy—The Empress fears she may be suspected of instigating it—The trial of Lieutenant Minovitch—His behaviour in prison—The British Ambassador advocates capital punishment—The early days of the Grand Duke—His personal appearance and character—D'Alembert refuses to act as his director—An English doctor invited to Russia to inoculate for small-pox—His handsome fees.

BEFORE leaving Moscow, Catherine ordered that the battalions of the guards who had shown mutinous tendencies should remain there. As it was

their privilege to accompany the Court of which they may be said to have formed a part, this desire of her Majesty exasperated them, and it is probable they would have broken into open revolt, but that ten thousand soldiers of other regiments were encamped near the city, and would have been called on if necessary to quell it. It was also the wish of the Empress that the Princess Daschkaw should remove herself to the peace and seclusion of her country home, some distance from Moscow; the chief reason for this temporary banishment from the Court being the exaggerated view entertained by that lady of her services in the revolution, and the troublesome importance which her egotism led her to assume.

That differences of opinion regarding these services were held by the receiver and the giver, is made plain by Catherine's statement in a private letter to Poniatowski, in which she said that the Princess, on account of her sister and her father, was in bad odour with the conspirators, who were not inclined to place confidence in one whose age was merely nineteen. Yet "she wishes to arrogate to herself all the honour of this revolution, and pretends that everything passed through her to reach me, though I was in communication with all the chiefs for six months before she even knew one of their names. It is quite true that she has great talent, but it is spoiled by her excessive ostentation and her naturally quarrelsome disposition.

She is hated by the chiefs, and liked by the giddy and rash, who communicated to her all they knew, which was only the minor details. It was necessary to conceal from her the channels through which others reached me, five months before she knew anything ; and during the last four weeks no more was told her than was absolutely neeessary."

But the Princess believing herself to be the pivot on which the revolution had turned, had presumed on her services, and by her arrogance, her imprudence, and her jealousy, made herself generally intolerable. Even on her own showing she must have been difficult to manage ; and must have been one of those tiresomely active, indefatigable busybodies, whose intentions are as admirable as their temperaments are unbearable. When on her return with the Empress from Peterhoff to St. Petersburg, she found a guard of a hundred soldiers around her father's house, where they had been placed to protect him from a probable attack from the soldiers of a neighbouring barrack, the Princess dismissed them saying they were needed elsewhere, and gave Kakavinsky the officer on guard, "plainly to understand," that he had mistaken her Majesty's instructions. For this she was gently reproved by Catherine when next they met. The Princess admits that her answer was short, and "was accompanied by an expression of countenance which showed the sort of feeling such a reception occa-

sioned" ; while at the same time she delivered up the ribbon of the Order that had been conferred on her.

At that her Majesty said, "Softly ; surely you must acknowledge that it was not right for you to dismiss the soldiers from their posts." But the Princess would not admit her fault. "True," she replied, "I ought to have permitted that blockhead Kakavinsky to leave your Majesty without a relief guard for the security of the palace." Being too good-natured to argue the point with one who believed herself incapable of making a mistake, Catherine said, "Come, come, enough has passed. What I have said was for your hastiness, but this is for your services," and with that she flung the discarded red ribbon of the Order of St. Catherine over the Princess's shoulder. The latter, instead of receiving it on her knees, as she proudly states, replied, "Your Majesty must pardon me for saying that the time is almost come when truth must necessarily be banished from your presence ; yet let me entreat that I may not receive this decoration which as an ornament I do not prize, and which as a recompense is of no value to one whose services, however estimated in the eyes of some people, never were and never can be purchased ;" in reply to which superfine speech her much-enduring Majesty embraced her affectionately saying, "At least friendship has some rights, and may I not be allowed in this instance to share its pleasures ?"

Not satisfied with being decorated, with having her husband promoted and his debts paid, with having apartments given to them in the Imperial palace, and permission to dine daily at the Empress's table, she considered her services were overlooked and their rewards dwarfed beside those bestowed on the Orloffs whom she detested. Always egotistical, impetuous, and imprudent, she did not hesitate to express her opinions with a hostility that is described as honesty by such people. One result of this was that while at Moscow a note was delivered one morning to her husband from the Empress who said, "It is my earnest desire not to be obliged to forget the services of Princess Daschkaw by her forgetfulness of what she owes herself; remind her of this, Prince, as she gives herself I understand, the indiscreet liberty of menacing me in her conversation." As the Princess, always blameless in her own eyes, was unaware of any speech of hers that could call for such remonstrance, she attributed it, as might be supposed, to the invention of her enemies. Although she refrains from mentioning their names, these may be guessed at when, in the same page as she records her wrongs, she speaks of being roused that night from a feverish repose "by the outcries and boisterous songs of a drunken group under my window, who had just burst into the street from the Orloffs' revellings; these bacchanals being a set of wretched weavers with

whose drunken feats the Orloffs used to divert themselves."

The Empress's warning had little effect on a person of so much spirit, as she would describe herself; but it was only when she was believed to have incited the guards to their recent outbreak, that the Princess was ordered to take up her residence in the country, lest she might employ herself in a similar manner in the capital.

Above all things Catherine was anxious that Voltaire, whose philosophy she had imbibed and whose good opinion she valued, should not believe that the revolution had been brought about by a young woman of nineteen, and Poniatowski was specially ordered to write and correct this statement, which had been made to Voltaire by "that basest of men," Ivan Ivanovitch Schouvaloff. As already told, the latter had been allowed to retain the properties and wealth given him by his Imperial mistress. That he remained in Russia when his tastes for foreign ways and habits tempted him abroad, was due to the hope of his becoming a personage in the new Court; but the deposition of the Czar and the accession of one who hated his family, ended this dream. After lingering for a short time in a place where once he had been all important but was now overlooked and slighted, he resolved to leave Russia and travel in European countries. His request to the Empress for the required permission

was readily granted ; but he had not been gone many days when she sent mounted messengers after him to have him brought back, possibly on learning of what he had written to Voltaire.

Fortunately for Ivan Ivanovitch he had reached the frontier town by the time that news of his intended arrest was secretly whispered to him, so that he had time to quit Russian territory just three hours in advance of the Imperial messenger who galloped into Riga with the intention of bringing him back. Later he figured at the court of Frederick the Great, who delighted in gossip concerning his contemporary sovereigns, especially if garnished with piquant details, and who must therefore have greatly enjoyed the society of Ivan Ivanovitch. But his reception at the Courts of Prussia and France was as nothing to that he received in London, where the highest women in society disputed with each other for the privilege of welcoming to their virtuous homes a man who had played such an intimate and interesting rôle in the Court of Elizabeth.

Anxious to impress her subjects with the magnificence of her Court, the Empress entered St. Petersburg with all possible pomp on the anniversary of the day on which she had seized upon the throne. Passing through streets hung with flags, decked with flowers, and thronged by enthusiastic crowds, surrounded by her Court, and preceded and followed by

lines of glittering troops, she gained the Summer Palace, on the balcony of which she stepped to receive and acknowledge their greetings, signs of a loyalty which insidious rumour had led her to doubt. A considerable body of the army which had come with her from Moscow took up their quarters in the capital and its neighbourhood, though among them there were very few of the guards, it being intended at this time to disperse that corps, so as to make it difficult for them to bring about any more revolutions.

Catherine had not been twelve months on the throne, before it became clear that a political event of importance was at hand. In the spring of 1763 it was plain to all that the last days had arrived of Augustus II., Elector of Saxony, who had been made King of Poland. Though at this time the Empress had not determined on the partition of Poland, she was certainly anxious to possess an increased influence over a country that bordering on her own, lay between her and Europe. That it should become united and powerful was to be dreaded, that it should be weakened by internal dissent and kept in subserviency to Russia, was to be desired. Much of its future state must depend upon the king who was elected to sit upon its throne ; and it was not only the wish to raise a former lover to the rank of a crowned head, but the knowledge of his weakness and the certainty of his subserviency to her, that led her to select Count

Poniatowski as the future King of Poland. Concerning him nothing was said at present; but England, Austria, and Prussia, were sounded as to the support which might be expected from them in carrying out her intentions of practically forcing a monarch of her choice upon a people who nominally were free to select their own sovereign. The disposition of France and Spain being known to be favourable to giving the monarchy to a son of the dying man, these countries were not appealed to.

To the first-mentioned Powers it was delicately and diplomatically explained by Catherine's Ministers, that her Imperial Majesty had nothing so much at heart as the preservation of the liberties of the Polish nation, and with that view she intended to promote as far as possible the election of a native; especially as the majority of the Poles justly feared that the selection of another prince of the house of Saxony, must inevitably make the Polish crown hereditary in a family so greatly strengthened by their close connection with the house of Bourbon. Austria, which had been alienated from the Prussian Court by the conduct of the late Czar, gave an evasive reply to Catherine's overtures; but Frederick the Great, now at a low ebb of his fortunes, desperately eager to gain a powerful ally, and despairing of finding one elsewhere, may be said to have fallen into Catherine's arms.

Although in the manifesto published on the deposition of her husband, she had given as one of the reasons of his inability to govern his empire his having brought to a close the war that had humbled the Prussian King, yet immediately afterwards she conveyed to Frederick's Minister her assurances of friendship for his master and her desire to be on friendly terms with him. These assurances must have been heartily welcome to that monarch at a time when,—as we learn from a despatch of Sir Andrew Mitchell dated April 19th, 1763,—owing to the want of bread and the calamities of war, his Majesty's subjects had grown so mutinous and outrageous that they had posted on the walls of the principal streets in Berlin, placards describing Frederick as a tyrant, complaining of oppression, calling for the redress of their grievances, and declaring that he deserved the fate of Peter III. "As this is hitherto wisely concealed from the King, whose vivacity of resentment might lead him still greater lengths, no search is making for the authors of these malicious libels," continues Mitchell who in giving an outline of one soon to become an ally of Russia adds, "The Ministers have not the courage to report to their master what is told them, and much less dare they insinuate what may be the consequences of a rash or false step. He is impatient of contradiction and receives too easily impressions that flatter or coincide with his present passion, and experience has shown

to me how difficult it is for that monarch to vanquish even his ill-grounded prejudices. His economy has increased of late to such a degree as to deserve another name; it extends to the meanest trifles. He is often rough and out of humour, but indeed his dominions are exhausted to such a degree, that the bare description would move the hardest heart."

No sooner had Catherine's intentions been communicated to him, than Frederick at once wrote to say that he would act in concert with her in procuring the crown of Poland for a native of that country. The friendship between them, springing from this correspondence, ripened to such a degree that we learn from the Mitchell Papers, "The King of Prussia affects the most firm attachment to the Empress's person, and the highest admiration of her virtues and accomplishments. At the same time he professes the utmost deference to Panin's talents and opinions." It is painful to relate that this Minister, now Catherine's chief adviser, did not return the high opinion entertained of him by his Prussian Majesty, for he told the British Minister in confidence, "that the King of Prussia had frequent fits of the spleen, which for the time totally disordered his understanding; that it was very carefully kept secret, or glossed over by another name, but that nothing was more certain." Panin added that, "if Russia did not keep his Majesty in awe, he was very capable of committing great follies."

Augustus, Elector of Saxony and King of Poland, died October 5th (1763) and no sooner had the news reached her than Catherine, now sure that any proposal she wished to make would be accepted by Frederick, wrote to tell him privately that she had selected Count Poniatowski to fill the throne of Poland. In his reply his Prussian Majesty fully approved of her choice. Indeed, to ingratiate himself still more with the Empress, Frederick sent her former lover the Order of the Black Eagle. Later the Prussian King engaged to support Poniatowski's candidature for the Polish throne, and in case that any confederation was entered into against him, undertook to march twenty thousand men into Poland.

Unlike Frederick, the British Government was unwilling to interfere in a matter which did not actively concern it, and delayed in giving a direct answer to the Empress's proposal for support in forcing a monarch on Poland. It was while this subject was being discussed between Count Panin and the Earl of Buckinghamshire, the former found it convenient to say that in looking over her papers, the Czarina had found she was indebted for ten thousand pounds to the English Court which had been lent to her through Sir Charles Hanbury Williams ; and as she was now paying all debts she had contracted when Grand Duchess, she was desirous of discharging this also. The Ambassador answered that it was an

After the picture by Sir Joshua Reynolds, P.R.A.

JAMES HARRIS, FIRST EARL OF MALMESBURY.

inconsiderable matter, which he felt sure his Court had forgotten, and that it gave him some uneasiness to have it mentioned at a time when the negotiations between the two countries had not taken the turn which might have been desired. "I evidently perceived that he was prepared for this remark," writes the Ambassador, "and he immediately replied that the Empress would be particularly concerned if this was understood in an improper light; that on the contrary, as her necessities had made her feel the utility of the assistance at that time, she should ever retain the most grateful sense of those early marks of the friendship of England. He then asked me in what manner I would receive the money, to which I answered that I could take no steps in an affair of that nature without his Majesty's particular instructions."

In the instructions forwarded to Lord Buckinghamshire from Whitehall, dated April 27th, 1764, on this subject, he was told that he must endeavour to avoid accepting the ten thousand pounds in repayment of the Empress's debt, and that he was to take the first occasion to let her know that his Majesty (George III.) while gratified by her expressions of regard for himself, desired that she would not disturb herself concerning a matter of such little importance as the repayment of her debt. "It would not be improper," says Lord Sandwich, in continuing his

cypher communication, "for your Excellency to avail yourself of this opportunity to renew the assurances of his Majesty's steady and invariable friendship to the Czarina, and to express how much he should be concerned if the affairs of Poland, in which it is impossible for this Crown, consistently with its situation to take an active part, should occasion any doubt of the King's not interesting himself extremely in whatever may tend to the advantage of Russia. That he is ready, as he always has been, to concur by his good offices in the Czarina's views, which he could not second in an open and vigorous manner without being the first to kindle a new war, just as he has restored peace to Europe after such an expense of blood and treasure."

For reasons of her own Catherine kept the name of her candidate for the throne of Poland a secret from all the European Powers save Prussia. Shrewd guesses had however been made regarding the man she favoured; but so late as December 20th (1763) Lord Sandwich, who had succeeded Lord Halifax as English Secretary for Foreign Affairs, complains to Lord Buckinghamshire that it seemed a want of confidence on the part of the Empress that she had not made known her intentions regarding Poniatowski, till his Majesty had already heard of them from various sources.

Meantime the new Elector of Saxony who desired

to retain the sovereignty of Poland in his family, wrote to Catherine soliciting her support of his wishes, but was briefly informed, "that she desired him as a true friend, not to expose his interests in an affair which in the issue could not answer his expectations." When her decision was formally made known to the Senate, it was strongly opposed by Gregory Orloff, who was supported in his antagonism by the war minister, Zachery Tchernicheff, and by the Great Chancellor, Count Woronzoff, who thought that it would be to the interest of Russia to support Saxony on the Polish throne, and so preserve an equalisation of power. Many of the Russian nobles were of the same opinion. The dissatisfaction was much greater in Poland, when the Russian and Prussian Ambassadors officially announced Poniatowski as the candidate that had been nominated by their respective sovereigns for the throne.

The only faction in that unhappy country to rejoice in this selection was the ancient and powerful family of the Czartoryski, whose heads at this time were Michael, Grand Chancellor of Lithuania, and Augustus Alexander, Général Régimentaire; who were Stanislaus Poniatowski's uncles. Between this family and that of the equally ancient and illustrious family of the Radzivil, a feud had long been maintained, which at the best of times merely smouldered, but occasionally broke out into fierce quarrels. On this occasion the

Radzivil faction bitterly opposed their old enemies in favour of John Clement Branicke; while others were in favour of the House of Saxony. The uttermost confusion and rancour followed when the Czartoryski requested Catherine to send troops to Warsaw for their protection and support. With this request she immediately complied by dispatching Prince Daschkaw into Poland at the head of ten thousand men. Indignant that a foreign army should force a king upon a people who by their constitution were free to elect their sovereign, Prince Karl Radzivil and his young and beautiful wife, placing themselves at the head of the poorly trained, irregular and inefficient Polish army, attacked the Russian troops, when notwithstanding the bravery of the Princess, who with drawn sword rode into the middle of the strife calling on the soldiers to follow her, the Poles were defeated, and the Prince and his wife obliged to fly from their country, and take refuge in Turkey.

After this the election of Poniatowski was a foregone conclusion, especially as France, Austria, and Spain, had decided from motives of policy not to interfere in the affairs of a country in which such an active interest was taken by Russia and Prussia; and in spite of the statement set down in the treaty between these latter nations, which declared that "his Majesty the King of Prussia and her Imperial Majesty have promised and mutually engaged themselves in

the most solemn manner, not only not to permit any one whoever he be, to attempt to divest the Republic of Poland of its right to free election, but also to prevent and to frustrate by all possible means and in common consent, the views and designs that have a tendency to that end, and even in case of necessity, to recur to the force of arms, to defend the Republic from the overthrow of its constitution and its fundamental laws." On the morning of September 7th, N.S., 1764, the senate and nobility of Poland went in solemn procession to the church of St. John at Warsaw, to hear Mass and to implore Divine guidance in the election of "a new king, who may have all the qualities necessary to defend the interests of the Church and of the republic"; after which, surrounded by troops and followed by immense numbers, they went to an open field about two miles from the city and near the village of Vola, where according to custom the Diet voted for the sovereign. There Poniatowski was elected and was proclaimed King of Poland and Duke of Lithuania; and in this way the first step was taken by Russia for the partition of Poland. As the British Government was particularly anxious to gain Catherine's favour at a time when it was hoped she would enter into an alliance with England, Lord Buckinghamshire, as we learn from the publications of the Royal Historical Society, was instructed to offer her his congratulations on her

success in placing Poniatowski on the throne of Poland, and to declare that an election "carried on with such unanimity and quiet, contrary to the usages of former times, reflected great honour upon the wisdom and moderation of her Imperial Majesty, and gave an agreeable prospect that it will contribute to strengthen public tranquillity and preserve the balance of power so necessary to the repose and prosperity of Europe."

Although Catherine's wishes were gratified by seeing a former lover raised to a throne, and in feeling her grasp firmly laid on a civilised country, yet as the English Ambassador at her Court tells us, she was so much embarrassed with demands from Poland, that he believed, even in the moment of success she repented of her undertaking. However, she was ever generous to those whom she loved, and when the newly made King sent her word that, "if she contented herself with placing him upon the throne without giving him further support and assistance, circumstanced as he was, instead of serving him she had only made him wretched," she, as the result of this appeal, sent him a hundred thousand ducats and promised him an equal sum to pay the expenses of his coronation. Including these amounts the election of Poniatowski cost her Imperial Majesty over three million roubles; an expenditure that must have seemed the more extravagant at this time, when she had begun to retrench and to practise an economy to which ill-natured people

might give a harder man, as Lord Buckinghamshire says ; and when the nobles grumbling at the outlay which their attendence at the Court required of them, and not receiving the customary presents from the sovereign, seized on the first possible pretext to ask permission to return to their estates.

In the spring of this year (1764) and before Poniatowski's election, Catherine expressed a strong desire to make an Imperial progress through part of her vast empire, especially Ethonia, Livonia, and Courland ; to review her splendid fleet at Cronstadt ; and to inspect a port which was being made upon the Baltic under the direction of Marshal Münnich. Ever mindful of the fickleness of her subjects, of the surprising ease with which revolutions had been accomplished, and of the attention which with his increasing years was being paid to her son, she determined to carry the boy with her. This resolution which was seconded by Gregory Orloff, was opposed by the lad's governor, Count Panin, and by other courtiers who, knowing how delicate the Grand Duke was, and how dangerous such a journey might prove to him, begged that he might be left behind ; requests that eventually were granted with reluctance. This desire to travel towards the frontier of Poland was by many regarded as a pretext for meeting her old lover once more, or to be near Warsaw at his election. Indeed rumour went further and declared

it was her intention to marry Poniatowski when she had succeeded in having him crowned and to resign the throne of Russia to her son.

All her friends, together with those whose vital interests it was that she should remain sovereign of Russia, earnestly implored her not to leave the capital; for though she had taken all possible precautions to prevent disturbances, it was generally believed that her seat upon the throne was far from secure. Proof of this might be seen in the fact that several officers in the horse guards had early in the summer been arrested for speaking disrespectfully of her Majesty; which by the way, was thought to be a result of visits paid to their barracks by the indefatigable and dissatisfied Princess Daschkaw, who had been allowed to return to St. Petersburg, and who attired in male costume had gone among and incited them to disloyalty. The only return made her by the Empress for these exertions, was that she was sent back once more to her country residence near Moscow, a merciful treatment which was probably inspired by the belief that disappointed ambition and boundless vanity had to some extent affected the Princess's mind.

The Empress, who was determined on taking this journey would not listen to those who opposed it, for not only was she satisfied that she incurred no danger in leaving St. Petersburg, but she was anxious

to show that a few idle rumours could not frighten her from her purpose. So many dark hints reached the English Ambassador of the advantage that would be taken of her absence from the capital, that he mentioned them to Baron Cherkasow, her chamberlain, who had the unhappiness to be the husband of the little hunchback Princess of Courland, whose deformity and cunning had once made her a favourite of poor foolish Peter. When Lord Buckinghamshire said to Baron Cherkasow, that if he were in his position he would throw himself at the Empress's feet and entreat her to abandon the idea of her journey, the chamberlain asked the Ambassador's permission to mention what he said to her Majesty. This being given his words were repeated, and he was summoned to an interview with her next day. He then assured her that what he had said arose from the interest he took in all that concerned her welfare ; that had he known any facts of importance he would have taken an early opportunity of communicating them himself; but that reports were brought to him every day from different quarters which though trifling when considered separately, might together be deserving of attention. In reply Catherine told him that she was aware of the seditious conversations which were held by certain disloyal subjects; that such precautions had been taken, that "if two persons had formed any agreement they could not communicate with a third

without almost a certainty of being discovered" ; that the late Czar's misfortune arose from his weakness and indecision; and that she could not waive her intention, lest she should be suspected of a diffidence which she did not feel.

The Empress with a splendid suite which included the foreign Ministers who were to accompany her to Cronstadt, set out on her journey at the end of June, at a time when the capital seemed in a state of perfect tranquillity; but she had not been gone a fortnight when the predictions made by her friends seemed verified. It will be remembered that Ivan, who when an infant had reigned as Czar for a few months, the same whom Frederick of Prussia to despite the late Empress had threatened to proclaim Emperor, and whose name had been occasionally whispered as a threatened rival to the present Empress, was confined in the fortress of Schlusselburg. Here he had for his guard Captain Vlassief and Lieutenant Tschekin, who were responsible for his safety, and who had orders to let none approach him. Under them was a guard which was relieved every eight days. No sooner was Catherine safely out of the way, than a second lieutenant of the regiment of the Smolensko Guards, named Basil Mirovitch, asked and contrived to be placed out of his turn on duty in the fortress.

This man, who like so many of his companions was

given to drinking, gambling, and profligacy, was utterly discontented with his lot, which he resolved to better by desperate means. Seeing how readily the late revolution had been accomplished, and the rich rewards that had been given to those who had brought it about, he conceived the idea of releasing Ivan, of whose mental condition he was well aware, and of bringing him to the barracks of the guards who he felt sure would in their disaffected state proclaim him Emperor. For this project he believed that no time could be better selected than during her Majesty's absence from the scene. Accordingly about two o'clock on the morning of Sunday the 15th of July, he suddenly called up the main guard, whom by wonderful promises he had already won to his side, and to whom he now read a paper purporting to be an order from the Empress who intended to abdicate, and who desired that Ivan should be brought to St. Petersburg where he might take possession of the crown. Then forming the men into line he ordered them to load with ball. The noise of their movements woke the governor of the fortress, who hurrying from his quarters roughly asked what was the cause of this disturbance. A forcible reply in the form of a blow on the head from a musket stunned him, and in that condition he was bound and carried away.

Mirovitch then marching his men to that part of the fortress where, in the thickness of its walls and

fronted by a dark heavily built corridor, Ivan was confined, demanded of the captain and lieutenant who were the special guardians of that unhappy prince and who nightly occupied the same cell, that the Emperor as he termed him, should be set free, threatening them with severe treatment if he were not immediately obeyed. As they refused he ordered his companions to attack the eight sentries who guarded the corridor, but the latter returning fire and showing determined resistance, Mirovitch and his men were obliged to retreat in confusion. As some of them began to murmur and show fear, their leader who was wildly excited, made them extraordinary promises of reward, and inflexibly resolved to rescue Ivan at all hazards, he ordered a cannon to be dragged from one of the bastions and placed in front of the Prince's cell. The eight sentries brought face to face with a piece of artillery made no further resistance. Then in a voice hoarse with rage Mirovitch called upon the guardians of his Emperor to deliver his Majesty or to take the consequences. In reply Captain Vlassief, speaking from within, firmly and calmly told him that if this madness was persisted in, he would have to act on his instructions to kill Ivan, rather than let him pass from his present safe keeping, and so endanger the public peace and safety of the empire ; heedless of which Mirovitch gave orders to have the door of Ivan's cell battered in.

That unhappy Prince, now in his twenty-fourth year, a man six feet high, with blonde hair, red beard, full blue eyes, and a vacant face, was sleeping soundly when the ring of muskets outside suddenly aroused him. Seeing the alarmed faces of his governors, hearing the heavy tramp of feet, muttered words, curses, the confused din, and finally the threat against his life, he sprang from his bed and stood irresolute and terror stricken. Then as the massive door yielded to the rain of violent blows, a sword flashed before him. Seizing it with his naked hands he struggled fiercely, calling in a semi-articulate voice for mercy, until pierced to the heart by the eighth blow, when he fell to the ground just as the shattered door fell inwards with a crash to admit Mirovitch backed by his soldiers. Seeing Ivan covered with blood, wide eyed, and motionless, Mirovitch started back and remained staring as if dazed and petrified. Presently a rough ironical voice told him he might do what he liked with his Emperor. At that he started and bending down lifted the stained, limp body in his arms and carried it out until he came to the front of the guard room. There laying it down he covered the remains with the Imperial flag, and going on his knees, kissed one of the nerveless wounded hands ; an example followed by his men. After that Mirovitch, acting like one in a dream, mechanically took off his sword, scarf, and gorget, and laid them beside the body, pointing to

which he said to his colonel who had just arrived, "There is your Emperor. Fortune has failed to favour me. I do not pity myself but these poor soldiers who will suffer for their zeal. For myself you can do as you please with me," saying which he kissed the under officers and gave himself up to the colonel.

He and his rebel soldiers were then placed under arrest, and news was sent of the event to Count Panin, who in turn dispatched a courier to the Empress with the intelligence. Though the tragedy took place between Sunday night and Monday morning, it was not until the following Wednesday that the foreign Ministers were acquainted with it. Then the Senate was assembled, the patrols were doubled in the streets at night, and several persons including some of the Smolensko Guards and several women were arrested. The Princess Daschkaw though strongly suspected of being concerned in the matter was left at liberty, her Majesty thinking it better policy to treat this fiery person with leniency and friendliness, in the hope that later she might learn from her imprudence and rashness all that she knew of this treason. When however Catherine wrote asking her old friend to come to her, she received a brief and spirited reply which said, "Madam, what is it you require of me? That I should die on the scaffold? I am ready to mount it."

The body of the murdered man was placed in the chapel of the fortress where it was visited by throngs of compassionate people and was then taken to the monastery church of Tichsina, about two hundred versts from St. Petersburg where it was interred.

The Empress returned to the capital in the first week of August, well in health but depressed by the event which had just happened, not only because it indicated the uncertainty of her position, but lest it should be considered that she had instigated the tragedy which had relieved her of one whom sedition might at any moment have used to depose her. With tears in her eyes she declared to Lord Buckinghamshire that nothing had ever given her such uneasiness as the suspicion that she had directly or indirectly contributed to this unfortunate catastrophe. To establish her innocence, a public trial was held by the Senate and the Synod of Mirovitch, who throughout behaved with surprising calmness and resignation. Acknowledging his crime he declared himself ready to meet the punishment it merited. When questioned as to whether he had known that Ivan was an imbecile, he answered that he had, and that it was this knowledge that tempted him to endeavour to release and proclaim the Prince, whom he hoped to govern completely. Then on being interrogated again and again as to his accomplices, he stated that they were those only who had acted with him, and who were imprisoned, and

he hoped that he should not be urged to accuse the innocent.

As Catherine had confirmed the abolition by her husband of the State Inquisition, "to the erection whereof the circumstances of the then times and the yet uncivilised manners of the nation had furnished occasion to the magnanimous and gracious monarch, Peter the Great," Lieutenant Mirovitch was not tortured. Instead a private committee of five persons was appointed to examine him closely regarding his supposed confederates, and on being interrogated by the Procureur-General, he said to him, "How should you like, sir, if I accused you?" on which with a shaking voice the questioner answered, "No, no, by no means; for God's sake, no." At the end of his trial he was sentenced to death. This did not seem to concern him so much as the fate of the soldiers whom he had induced to join in his revolt. Forty-eight of these were punished with great severity. One of them was sentenced to run the gauntlet twelve times through a line of a thousand men who knouted him; others were whipped as often as ten times. As a result many of them died, those who survived being sent to the public works with a chain riveted to their legs to which a heavy log of wood was attached.

While waiting for his last hour Mirovitch continued to show the same calmness and courage as he had at

his trial ; and his devotion was such that as a penance, he refused everything offered to him save bread, roots, and water. As for upwards of four and twenty years no one had suffered capital punishment in Russia, it was generally believed that his sentence would not be carried out. Catherine was unwilling that he should die, but feared that her pardon might be considered by her enemies as a favour shown to an accomplice. While she hesitated the English Ambassador said to her, that though it might surprise her to hear the representative of a country notable for its lenient punishments, recommend the shedding of blood, yet he was of opinion that the long disuse in Russia of capital executions had had the worst effect, and that it seemed to him indispensably necessary that an opportunity should be taken to put an offender to death. This inhumane advice coming from the ambassador of a civilised nation, had its effect ; for to the surprise of all Lieutenant Mirovitch was publicly beheaded, and Lord Buckinghamshire was flattered by hearing her Imperial Majesty say to him, "Vous voyez, Monsieur l'Ambassadeur, que vos conseils ne sont pas jettés en l'air."

As Peter and Ivan, the legitimate heirs to the throne of Russia, had been removed from her path, there now remained no one to menace Catherine's supreme sway but her son, the Grand Duke Paul. Taken from her at the moment of his birth, and kept apart from

her in his earliest years, she had little knowledge of his characteristics, had had no influence in shaping them, and felt little affection for him. When by the revolution she placed herself upon the throne, he had sense enough, young as he was, to understand that she had ousted him from his rightful place ; and the fact that she had not proclaimed him her heir, but had left him in dependence on her will for that position, did not help to give him confidence in her interest in him. The English Ambassador in writing of Paul says he frequently noticed the changes in his countenance when he was in his mother's presence. "If her looks were directed towards him, he immediately put on that air of deference and respect due from a child to a parent, from a subject to his prince. But if her attention was otherwise engaged, he would sometimes eye her with the apparent resentment of a son whose father she had dethroned, and whose birthright she had usurped."

With a wretched complexion, flat nose, retreating forehead, and heavy brows meeting over dull eyes, he was far from interesting ; while when he arrived at maturity, he had the reputation of being the ugliest man in an empire of ugly people. The fact that Elizabeth had in his earlier years swathed him in flannel, wrapped him in furs, and guarded him from cold, was held responsible for his weakly constitution, if not for his puny frame. But from the

interest and anxiety shown in his health by the public, Catherine had an opportunity of gauging the regard in which he was held, and of facing the inevitable and disturbing conclusion that on his approach to manhood attempts would be made to place him on the throne. To a woman of her intelligence, it must have seemed plain that his actions regarding his future and her own must depend on his disposition, but this gave her little comfort, for he was sulky, brooding, and melancholy. In writing of him in his tenth year, the French Envoy, M. Berenger, says that the Grand Duke gave evidences of dark and dangerous qualities. "He asked a few days ago why his father had died, and why the throne which belonged to him had been given to his mother. He added that when he was grown up he would get at the bottom of all that. They say that the child makes too many such remarks for them not to reach the ears of the Empress."

As he advanced in years all that he learned of the startling drama of the revolution impressed his imagination; while all that he remembered or heard related of the weaknesses of Peter was forgotten in pity for his fate. As he showed a retentive memory and an interest in his studies, great care was taken by his mother of the lad's education. Count Panin who superintended it, dined with him, slept in his room, and accompanied him when he went abroad; and under him masters were specially engaged for

their ability to teach French, German, dancing, and riding. When the Grand Duke was in his ninth year the Empress, who desired to surround herself with illustrious men, invited the French Academician Jean le Rond d'Alembert, philosopher, scholar, and author, to direct her son's education, for which she offered him ten thousand roubles a year. But though comparatively poor, even this princely sum did not tempt him to leave his beloved Paris for a country where, as he said, it was "too easy to die of a colic," and he declined the proffered honour. So anxious, however, was Catherine to see so celebrated a man in her service, that she sought to tempt him to Russia by raising his stipend to twenty thousand roubles a year, with a house in St. Petersburg, and the rank of an ambassador at her court.

When making these magnificent offers, through her secretary, she wrote him a letter which gives an excellent example of her style. In this she says: "I can easily conceive that it costs a philosopher like you nothing to despise what the world calls grandeur and honour; these in your eyes are very little, and I can readily agree with you that they are so. But to be born and called to contribute to the happiness and even the instruction of a whole nation, and yet to decline it, is in my opinion refusing to do that good which you wish to do. Your philosophy is founded in a love to mankind; permit me then to tell

you, that to refuse to serve mankind while it is in your power is to miss your aim. I know you too well to be a good man, to ascribe your refusal to vanity. I know that the sole motive of it is the love of ease and leisure to cultivate letters and the friendship of those you esteem. But what is there in this objection? Come with all your friends, I promise both them and you every conveniency and advantage that depends upon me; and perhaps you will find more liberty and ease here than in your native country. I own to you that I have the education of my son so much at heart, and I think you so necessary to it, that perhaps I press you with too much earnestness. Excuse my indiscretion for the sake of the occasion of it, and be assured that it is my esteem for you that makes me so urgent." Notwithstanding this flattering letter and her splendid offers, M. d'Alembert preferred to remain in France much to the disappointment and displeasure of her Imperial Majesty and the indignation of his foster-mother, the wife of a glazier under whose roof the greater part of his tranquil, unambitious, well-disciplined life was passed. "You will never," she told him, "be anything but a philosopher. And what is a philosopher? A fool who plagues himself during his life, that men may talk of him after his death."

A little later Catherine was more successful in bringing to Russia, but for a different purpose, a distinguished

Englishman, Dr. Thomas Dimsdale. It happened that in the spring of 1768, a severe epidemic of small-pox broke out in St. Petersburg, and fatally attacked several members of the Court. In Russia as well as in every country in Europe this scourge swept millions annually into their graves. Dread of it froze every man, for it was considered impossible to prevent the attacks and improbable that, once attacked, he could recover. The knowledge that showed how false was this opinion first came from the East. While at Adrianople, Lady Mary Wortley Montagu saw the process of inoculation being carried out as a preventative to this foul disease. On her return in 1718, she introduced the practice into England, in the innocent desire to benefit suffering humanity ; but so great and so bitter was the opposition she met with from medical men, who as a body are ever the most narrow, the most hostile to all innovations, and so wrathful were the denunciations of the clergy, of one who by introducing this remedy from a barbarous and heathen people, had dared to come between a merciful God and the chastisements He wished to inflict upon His children, that inoculation made slow progress.

When, however, in spite of these learned and blasphemous idiots, it was proved to be a marvellous benefit to mankind, the medical profession gradually condescended to practise inoculation, from which it was found a considerable income could be derived.

Among those who gave the subject their attention about fifty years after its introduction into England, was Dr. Thomas Dimsdale, who in 1767 published a pamphlet called *The Present Method of Inoculation for the Small Pox.* Some months after its issue, its author received a letter from the Russian Minister residing in London, requesting that he would call on him. He then asked Dr. Dimsdale if he would make a journey to St. Petersburg that he might introduce his system of inoculation there. This he refused to do at first ; but when again pressed to visit Russia, and told that the Empress desired to be inoculated, and hints of rich rewards were given him, Dr. Dimsdale agreed to make the journey.

On his arrival at St. Petersburg in the last days of July 1768, he found that the Empress had for her better protection taken up her residence in the palace of Tzarskoe Selo ; but he had an interview with Count Panin who told him that they had in Russia many physicians of skill and learning, but who had no experience in the practice of inoculation, and that therefore to his treatment would be submitted the precious lives of two of the greatest personages in the world, "with whose safety the tranquillity and happiness of this great empire are so intimately connected that, should an accident deprive us of either, the blessings we now enjoy would be turned to the utmost state of misery and confusion." The next

day the Englishman was presented to her Majesty who asked him many intelligent questions regarding the operation, and then told him that as her life was her own, she was ready to place it in his hands. For all that, thinking that her inoculation might end fatally, and aware of the vengeance which her subjects might as a consequence take upon him, she, in order to render his escape from Russia easy, secretly ordered relays of horses to be ready for his flight all along the line, from the capital to the frontier of her dominions.

Both she and the Grand Duke were successfully inoculated, and their example was followed by Gregory Orloff, and subsequently by numbers of the nobles. Later still Catherine bought a house in St. Petersburg which under the directions of Dr. Dimsdale, was established as a hospital for the inoculation of the poor. Well pleased with the English doctor, his services were repaid with her usual generosity. A fee of ten thousand pounds down was paid him, with two thousand pounds for his travelling expenses, and a pension of five hundred a year. He was also presented with miniature portraits of herself and her son set in diamonds, was created a Councillor of State, given the hereditary title of Baron, and granted permission to add to his coat-of-arms the wing of the Black Eagle of Russia.

CHAPTER X

Dissensions in Poland under its new King—Turkey is incited to make war on Russia—A plot to abduct or assassinate Poniatowski—Daring attempt in the streets of Warsaw—His Majesty is captured—The distress that befell him—Wandering through the night—An alarmed miller—Return of the King toWarsaw—The first dismemberment of Poland—Her Majesty's admiration for Gregory Orloff—His unfaithfulness and indifference—He resolves to restore order to plague-stricken Moscow—Assassination of an archbishop—Orloff's rewards—He attends a congress—His incompetency and splendour—An alarming letter is placed in his hand—Hurries back to St. Petersburg and is prevented from entering the capital—The new favourite—Gregory Orloff suddenly appears at Court—The Grand Duke's first marriage—His bride arrives in Russia—Her marriage and her death—The Grand Duke goes to Berlin and is entertained by Frederick the Great—The impression he made—Returns to Russia, whither he is followed by the Princess of Wurtemburg—Her marriage and progeny.

ONCE Poniatowski was elected King of Poland, it was believed by his family the Czartoryski, that the troops they had invited to Warsaw to support him would be withdrawn. That they should return to their own country was however far from Catherine's intention ; for from certain motives, she desired them to remain in the Polish capital under the command of the imperious Prince Nicholas Repnin, where their

hated presence was resented by the people. Scarce had the new reign begun when dissatisfaction broke out concerning a subject the least easy of all others to settle; the demand made by the Lutherans, the Calvinists, and the members of the Greek Church—who together were named the Dissidents—to be admitted to all civil and military offices, to be eligible as members of the senate, and to enjoy the same social and religious rights as their Catholic neighbours.

Such claims fired the blood of the ancient Polish nobility, who regarded both the schismatics and the heretics with disdain. In the hope of gaining these rights, the members of the Greek Church appealed to Russia, while the Lutherans and Calvinists sought the interference of England and Prussia. When on September 1st, 1766, the Ministers of these countries presented memorials on behalf of the Dissidents to the Senate, violent debates ensued, which the King with characteristic suavity and weakness sought to soften and subdue. As a result he was declared an abettor of the enemies of the State. Later when Prince Nicholas Repnin, who overawed Poniatowski and practically ruled Poland, demanded in the name of her Imperial Majesty toleration and political equality for the Dissidents, and was refused, he peremptorily caused the chief opponents to his wishes—the Bishop of Cracow, the Bishop of Kief, Count Rjeursky Voivode of Dolina, and some other nobles to be arrested and

sent to Siberia. The Dissidents then formed themselves into confederations, whose numbers were strengthened by scores of liberal Catholics who sought this means of showing their hostility to a King who was no more than a marionette in the hands of Catherine. To place himself at the head of these Prince Radzivil returned from Turkey.

The deliberations of the senate were now carried on under fear of Prince Repnin, and it may be said under his dictation. But this was not for long. The old nobility chafing under this humiliation and revolting against the interference of Russia, also formed themselves into confederations, vowed vengeance against Russia, and taking up arms seized the fortress of Bar, the city of Cracow, offered violent resistance to all opposed to them, and finally called upon the Sultan of Turkey to aid them. Meantime Poniatowski, tossed about from one faction to another, derided by each, accused by both, hectored by Prince Repnin, and threatened by Catherine, remained practically a prisoner in his splendid palace; while Europe looked on at the astonishing spectacle of despotic Russia posing as the guardian of Polish freedom, and a Catholic nation seeking protection from the Turk. Before an answer could be returned by the Sultan, Poland—once a free and noble nation, but now deprived of her ancient right to elect a monarch, to frame and administer her own laws, and dictated to by Russia—

became the scene of civil warfare, partly political, partly religious, which was carried on with a ferocity and cruelty that drenched battle-fields with some of the oldest and bravest blood in the country, and left them for months covered with the bodies of the slain.

Matters now became more complicated by the action of France. Under the seemingly innocent desire to mark the boundary lines of Russia and Poland, Catherine, in tracing them on the map, included among her own possessions a wide slice of Polish territory. That this was a move towards the dismemberment of Poland, was plain to all Europe, but France alone seemed at this time to have dreaded her increasing power. In the hope of lessening it, and of giving employment to the Russian arms which might otherwise be turned against his Most Christian Majesty, the French Minister for Foreign Affairs, the Duc de Choiseul, instructed the representative of Louis XV. at the Court of the Sultan to incite him to make war on Russia, by pointing out that the latter power had unjustly violated the rights of the Poles by invading their territory, and that her Imperial Majesty's proposed annexation of a portion of Poland would have dangerous consequences for the Ottoman empire, on whose frontier the Russian troops had already encroached, and where they had committed various outrages. It was not, however, until a second application to the Turks had been urged by the confederates, and a

second appeal had been made by the French Minister to oppose Catherine's designs, that Turkey declared war upon Russia. On the conflict that followed between these two empires, in which by the way the Empress employed several English naval and military officers, it is not necessary to dwell in these pages, save in so far as it influenced the fate of two prominent persons in the reign ; a man her Majesty had loved, and a man she still loved.

The first of these was Poniatowski. The patriots believing him in league with Catherine for the destruction of their beloved country, resolved to remove him forcibly from the throne. At Bar in Podolia, a conspiracy was entered into which had for its head General Palausky, a man of daring courage. From the three officers, Kosinski, Strawenski, and Lakawaski, and forty soldiers who were initiated into the secret of his intention, a solemn oath was exacted either to deliver the King into his hands, or if that were impossible, to kill his Majesty. From inquiries it was learned that Poniatowski was to spend Sunday evening, September 3rd, 1771, at the Blue Palace, the residence of his uncles, the Czartoryski, and on his return from their palace, it was determined by the conspirators to put their scheme into execution. On the cold grey afternoon of that day a number of them entered Warsaw, disguised as peasants, and stationed themselves along the route by which the

King was to return to his palace. At nightfall in the narrow unlit streets, they found shelter unnoticed in the deep porches of sombre houses and in the recessed portals of gloomy churches. As early as ten o'clock the unexpected clatter of horses' hoofs and the red glare of torches carried in advance, told them that his Majesty was returning to his palace. His escort consisted of some fifteen horsemen riding beside and behind the coach in which he was seated with a single aide-de-camp. As it reached the sharp corner of the street of the Capuchins some of the conspirators bounded forward and seizing the horses by the head, bade the driver stop, while as if to enforce their command, pistols were fired into the coach. At that the aide-de-camp nimbly bounded from his seat and ran for his life, an example that was followed by every member of the Royal escort save two, one of whom was shot and the other disabled.

Left to his fate, Poniatowski remained perfectly calm, marvelling probably at his escape from a bullet that had pierced his hat and from the sabre stroke that had cut his forehead. Before he could take any action he was seized by the collar and dragged from his coach, and then gripped firmly by the arms by two horsemen, was hurried on foot between them through silent, dark, and deserted streets for some five hundred paces. As this mode of con-

veyance seemed too slow to those who feared pursuit, they mounted him on horseback. Not daring to pass through the city gates they resolved to jump the wide moat that surrounded Warsaw, but on doing this the horse on which Poniatowski rode, fell as he reached the opposite bank and broke his leg. As his rider scrambled to his feet, he became painfully conscious that one of them was hurt. To the scowling-visaged group around him this was of less importance than the diamond cross of the Order of the Black Eagle of Prussia, which glinted on his breast. In an instant it was plucked from thence, and the fellow in whose fist it was grasped was surrounded by a group that clamoured for their share in the glory of this action, for it was their intention to take the cross at once to General Palausky as an incontestable proof that the King was in their hands and would soon be in his. Others of them robbed him of his jewellery, his money, and all he possessed save his tablets and his pocket-handkerchief. Quarrelling and swearing over the distribution of these articles, the greater number of the conspirators disappeared into the deeper darkness beyond, from which they emerged no more, so that only seven of them remained with the Royal captive.

It now became their aim to discover a carriage which was in waiting for his Majesty and in which he was to be taken to General Palausky, but in the unbroken and boundless darkness of the night, under

a sky of pall-like clouds, and surrounded as they found themselves by dreary and pathless marshes, they were unable to imagine in which direction the conveyance stood. As their horses were continually sinking into the loose and watery soil, they made Poniatowski walk, in doing which he lost one of his shoes. After wandering about for a considerable time, half-frozen and up to the knees in mud, noises heard in the distance assured them that they were still near the city, and that an alarm had been raised that must end in a search for the King and in their own capture. At that the greater part of them demanded of their leader Kosinski, that Poniatowski should be dispatched by a blow of a sabre and that they should escape, but to this Kosinski would not listen, and persuaded them to put back into their scabbards the swords they had half-drawn. Presently on coming to firmer ground they mounted the King again on horseback, one of them taking the bridle while two others held him by either hand. More familiar than they with the place in which they now found themselves, he saw that they were nearing a little village called Burakow, but instead of allowing them to take their course and enter it, he immediately warned them of their danger, telling them that Russian troops were stationed there who would certainly rescue him ; his motive for this being, not to save them from the fate they deserved, but lest at the sight of the Russian

soldiers, his captors should kill him and fly. It also served to gain their confidence by showing that he had no intention of escaping from them; and so pleased were they with him for the moment that, when shivering from cold he asked for a shoe and a cap, they were given to him.

Turning sharply to the right they wandered about once more, moving in a circle until they came to the wood of Bielany which was only a league from Warsaw. Alarmed at their close proximity to the city and despairing of finding the carriage, they again urged their leader to kill the King and have done with him. This time they would possibly have used force to obtain their demands had they not suddenly heard the tramp of a patrol of Russian soldiers, on which four of them fled in alarm, while the other three holding a musket to Poniatowski's head dragged him into the wood. To two of those who remained this did not seem a secure refuge; the rustle of a bough, the moaning of the wind, or the stirring of some wild animal, frightening them into the belief that they were in the grasp of the law. Dispirited and weary they tramped onwards until soon after, as a steely light began to pierce the blackness of a threatening sky, they saw through the sombre trunks of the trees the uniforms of some Russian soldiers, when two of the conspirators noiselessly and swiftly disappeared, leaving Kosinski alone with the King. The latter who

was well-nigh dead from fatigue, and suffered severely from the hurt of his leg and the wound of his head, asked to be allowed to rest; but as daylight was increasing every minute, bringing fresh dangers, Kosinski refused, saying they must now be close to where the carriage awaited them.

Side by side they therefore trudged forward until they came to a monastery, which as yet showed no sign of life within or without, as it stood solitary and peaceful in the heart of the wood. Looking at it with longing eyes Poniatowski emboldened by some signs of repentance in the face and in the manner of his companion said to him: "You don't know where you are leading me, or what danger may overtake you; so you had better let me enter this monastery while you make your escape;" to which Kosinski moodily answered: "No, I have sworn an oath to give you into the hands of my chief." As the day broadened and a drizzling rain began to fall, their steps became more slow, their depression increased, and the fierceness in Kosinski's haggard face gave way to a more humane expression as he listened to the remarks made from time to time by his companion. And when presently the latter, hardly able to drag himself along after his tramp through the night, once more asked to be allowed to rest, his request was granted.

Side by side they sat down upon the damp ground, when the monarch in his slow gentle voice, in which

there was no echo of fear, began to talk of the injustice and inhumanity of those who had wished to murder him, and of the invalidity of an oath taken for so base and cowardly a crime. The fascination which Poniatowski exercised over most of those who approached him began to have its effects, for soon his hearer cried out, "But if I conduct you back to Warsaw, what will be the consequence? I shall be executed." To that the King replied, "I give you my word that you will suffer no harm; but if you doubt my promise, escape while there is time, and you may be sure I shall not put your pursuers on the way you will take." At that Kosinski suddenly flung himself into a kneeling position, and begging pardon for his outrage swore that from that moment, come what would, he would protect him from danger and deliver him into the hands of his friends. While promising him forgiveness, and guaranteeing that no harm should befall him, the King at the same time thought it wise to gain some place of refuge; and knowing the spot in which they were, he suggested that they should seek it at a mill which was close by, and to which he led the way. Here, as at the monastery there was no sign of life, and when Kosinski impatiently knocked, no answer was given. The breaking of a pane of glass in a window aroused a sturdy miller, who believing they were robbers, refused them admission. In vain Kosinski stated that

it was a noble who had been waylaid and wounded by scoundrels, that desired shelter ; and it was not until the King, speaking through the broken pane said, that if they were robbers as the miller supposed it would be as easy for them to break the whole window as a single pane, that his argument appealing to dull brains gained them admission. The first thing the King did was to write a note on one of his tablets to General Coccei, Colonel of the Foot Guards, saying, "By a miracle I have escaped from the hands of assassins. I am now at the mill of Mariemont ; come as soon as possible and convey me back. I am wounded but not dangerously." When this was written it was difficult to get it carried into Warsaw, for the miller's sons considered that the robbers who had, as they were told, waylaid the nobleman, would fall upon and ill-treat themselves. The promise of reward eventually overcame fear ; and no sooner had the note been dispatched than the King, covered with the miller's cloak, and lying on some sacks spread for him on the floor, fell fast asleep.

In the meantime confusion and fear had spread through Warsaw. The King's escort having reached the palace, told of the attack from which they had so marvellously and so swiftly escaped ; on which the guards hurrying to the scene of the attack, found his hat pierced by a bullet, and stained with blood. In the general consternation that followed and the

multiplicity of advice given, prompt action was not taken ; one party arguing that if followed, the conspirators would surely kill the King and make their escape in the darkness, while another declared that to delay pursuit was to allow them to escape with their victim. Eventually his kinsmen and some other nobles mounted their horses, and led by torches arrived at the moat which he had jumped. Here finding his cloak, which was pierced with sabre thrusts and bullet holes and smeared with blood, they believed he had been murdered, and that further search for him would be useless. When, however, after a night of anxiety, a miller's boy brought the note to General Coccei, the relief and joy of the citizens were unbounded. Attended by a detachment of guards, the General hastened to the mill before which he saw Kosinski keeping sentry, much to the amazement of the miller and his family ; they being until then unaware that they sheltered the King.

A carriage which followed the General, was soon at the mill door and in this conveyance the King was driven back to the capital which he reached at five in the morning, but not before the streets were crowded by the masses with whom he was always popular personally. Cheering him wildly they ran in his wake to the palace, where he was soon surrounded by the nobles who remained loyal to him, and who enthusiastically congratulated him on his wonderful escape.

On surgeons being summoned to examine his wounds, it was found that he had an ugly sabre cut on his skull, to heal which they proposed "to bleed him at the foot"; but as his feet were bruised and blistered from his long walk, this remedy was abandoned. And no sooner was he safe, than search was made for the conspirators. General Palausky, the instigator of the plot, after hairbreadth escapes managed to reach America, whose army he entered and in whose service he lost his life while attempting to force the British lines at the siege of Savannah in 1779. Those he had employed to kidnap the King were soon captured, and sentenced to death. On his Majesty pleading for them, all but two had their punishment commuted to imprisonment for life and were condemned to work at the fortifications of Kaminiec. Strawenski and Lakawaski, who were sentenced to be executed, were through the intercession of the King, spared the horrible preliminary tortures which the laws of Poland decreed on all who attempted the lives of Kings. Kosinski was pardoned and given a pension, when he settled in Italy where he died.

The confused and weakened condition of Poland, rent as it was by civil and religious strife, seemed to furnish the best opportunity which could be taken by her enemies to dismember her. The subject can only be briefly touched on in these pages in which it is necessary to mention it merely in so far as it relates to the fate

of Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski, King of Poland. On his election to the throne, Russia, Prussia, and Austria had solemnly renounced all right or title to his kingdom. For all that, Frederick II., who was foremost in breaking a pledge never meant to be kept, had long desired to possess that part of Poland since known as Western Prussia which, lying between Eastern Prussia and his German dominions, not only disjoined them, but at critical periods such as during his late campaigns, had completely cut off all communications between them. Craftily setting to work to gain the coveted spot, he not only declined to aid in putting down the civil war in Poland, but on the plague breaking out in that country he, under pretence of preventing infection, advanced his troops into Polish Prussia where they occupied the whole district. Austria on the same allegation did likewise in another part of the kingdom, while Russia, by way of supporting Poniatowski poured fresh troops into Warsaw; for fearing lest these latter Powers should resent his annexations, Frederick had privately approached them on the subject, and entered into a compact with them to divide the greater part of Poland between them.

A treaty to this effect was signed in February 1772 at St. Petersburg by the plenipotentiaries of Prussia, Russia, and Austria, but so secretly that the English Minister at Catherine's Court could obtain no authentic information concerning it until two months later;

while it was not until seven months later, in September, that these Powers formally announced their intentions to the King and Senate assembled at Warsaw. Not only did he and it appeal against this wrong, but England, France, Sweden, and Norway entered protests; however, as Poland because of internal strife was unable to defend herself, and the Powers mentioned were not prepared to make war to protect her from rapaciousness, her doom was sealed. It was not until wholesale bribery bought many traitors, not until threats were made to pillage Warsaw and depose and imprison the King, that—by a majority of six in the upper house, and one in the lower house—this first dismemberment was ratified by the Senate, and Poland lost five million inhabitants.

Throughout this stormy time Poniatowski, who had quite lost favour with Catherine, loudly and earnestly protested against this wholesale spoliation of a once powerful and splendid nation, of which but a patch was finally left for him to reign over. For all that there were thosewho remembering his former close connection with Russia, and that he had accepted two hundred and fifty thousand roubles from Catherine in recompense for that portion of his dominions that had fallen into her hands, refused to credit his sincerity. On these nobles and members of the Senate—reproaching him with the ruin of their country, he showed spirit for the first time. Casting his hat

upon the floor, he said to them: "The partition of our unhappy country is a consequence of your dissensions and your eternal disputes, and it is to yourselves alone that you should attribute your misfortunes. As for me, if no more territory should be left me than could be covered by this hat, I should nevertheless be still in the eyes of all Europe, your lawful but unhappy king." His reign over them was not to last long; but its termination will be mentioned in due course.

The second individual to whom the warfare of Russia brought about a crisis in his life was Gregory Orloff, who for ten years had reigned as the Empress's favourite. A man of great height and splendid build, superbly handsome, knowing nothing of fear, valiant to rashness, ambitious, with little education and no intelligence, a lover of pleasure, of wine, of rich apparel and magnificent jewels, unceremonious and simple in his manner, loud voiced and stormy in his anger, and as easily appeased as a child, Catherine had loved him before gratitude was called on to temper her feelings, and passionately worshipped him when he had risked his head to place her on the throne.

Of this she made no mystery, but woman like, called upon the world around her to witness the joy and glory that swelled her heart in giving homage to its master. As an example of her *naïveté* on this point it may be mentioned that one evening shortly after

her coronation at Moscow, her Majesty, the foreign Ministers, and the whole Court witnessed an amateur performance of a Russian tragedy in which Gregory Orloff played a principal part, rather awkwardly as one of the ambassadors thought. But this was not the opinion of the Empress, for, says Baron de Breteuil, she was "so charmed with the graces of the actor, that she called me several times to speak to me about him, and ask me what I thought of him. Nor did she confine herself to this with the Austrian Ambassador who was sitting by her side. She cried out to him a dozen times in every scene, all about the beauty and dignity of Orloff."

Estates, villages, palaces, castles, including that of Ropsha where the unfortunate Peter III. was strangled, thousands of slaves, and millions of roubles were given him, while honours and high positions were thrust upon him. Though a member of the Senate he seldom honoured its meetings with his presence, but when he did his questions, which showed an unabashed ignorance, his rash opinions, and unwise advice greatly embarrassed his fellow-senators, and required all the tact of Catherine to cover his foolishness. For all that he became, according to the authority just quoted, an emperor in all but name. Writing in November 1764 the French Minister says that Gregory Orloff publicly took liberties with his Sovereign, which in polite society "a self-respecting

mistress would not tolerate in her lover"; a statement which is supported by the English Ambassador who, in a letter to Lord Sandwich at about the same date, says that from Orloff's want of attention and of respect to the Empress, many thought that they were certainly married.

That he never paid her even the ordinary compliments expected from a lover is plain from Catherine's own confession, in replying to a letter of Madame Geoffrin. The latter had said that her Majesty was very active, hearing which Gregory Orloff condescended the remark: "That is true."

"It was the first time I ever knew him to praise me," writes Catherine, adding gratefully, "it is to you madame that I owe that." But lack of praise must have been easier to bear than unfaithfulness in an idol, yet it was only to be expected that loved as he was, he being an ordinary specimen of human nature would not return the affection lavished on him. The miniature of herself in a heart-shaped frame set with diamonds, had no power to control the errant fancies of the breast on which it hung; for in a short while he gave her Majesty many rivals. Even this she overlooked, and when one of the senators would have separated from his wife on account of Orloff, her Majesty interfered and healed the husband's wounded honour by giving him extensive lands in Livonia.

It is probable that she pardoned much to the man who was the father of her three children; a boy named Basil Bobrinski, who was brought up as his nephew by her chamberlain Shkurin; and two girls who were reared as her nieces by Mademoiselle Protassof, her Majesty's chief woman of the bed-chamber. Not that there were not differences and quarrels between them, which became excellent matter for gossip in the foreign Courts. The French envoy, Béranger, tells us of a lively scene, at the end of which Orloff, who treated his Sovereign as if she were his servant, went into the country for three days. "For two days Catherine was in despair. On the third she wrote a most tender letter to her lover, which she enclosed in a very costly box, saying that she hoped to see him at Tsarskoe Selo, where she was going. It is there that the reconciliation took place."

That his ill-behaviour should in time weaken her love for him, was to be expected by all save its object, who believed his supremacy over her was not to be shaken. Nor for all his infidelities did he desire to be other than her lover, and the first man in the empire. When however it gradually became plain even to him that she had grown weary of his inconstancies, he roused himself and sought to regain her heart, not by breaking with the women with whom he delighted to carouse, or by asking forgiveness of the

woman he had slighted, but by an action which would again prove his courage and strength and that would do service to his Sovereign and her empire.

At this time, towards the end of 1770, a dreadful plague which had been brought into Russia by the troops that returned from Turkey, devastated the country. It was characteristic of the authorities that on its first breaking out in the army, and at a moment when it was carrying away hundreds daily, an order was officially issued forbidding the word "plague" to be spoken, and denying the existence of this terrible scourge. Military surgeons were obliged to sign this glaring and dangerous lie; which helped to spread the epidemic by disarming precautions that would otherwise have been taken. When in a little while it reached Moscow, a similar ukase was printed and circulated, which assured the citizens that the pestilence did not exist in their midst, but that a wicked and false alarm had been raised by the malicious. To this both surgeons and doctors agreed. When, however, news of the calamity reached Catherine, she immediately dispatched assistance to the stricken city, from whence the nobles had already fled, carrying contagion and death to the surrounding towns, villages, and country. In Moscow itself about eight hundred died daily, many of them lying for days in the streets where they had fallen, or into which they had been flung from their houses, the authorities having neither

sufficient carts nor assistants to remove the dead. From this cause, as well as from the fact that little precaution was taken, the terrible pestilence continued to spread, and those infected seldom recovered.

Driven to frenzy by fear of a ghastly death that lurked everywhere, the people were ready to clutch at any prospect of escape; and when on the word of a fanatical lunatic they were told that an ikon above the gate of St. Barbara, on condition of devotion being paid to it, had promised to end the plague, they flocked to it in immense numbers, the stricken with uplifted arms and wailing voices imploring mercy, the healthy crying to be defended from a fate which their heedlessness invited. Seeing that the gate of St. Barbara became a breeding place for the disease, the venerable Archbishop Ambroise, having vainly explained to his flock the danger they incurred and besought them to disperse, applied to General Yerapkin to have the ikon removed. On his soldiers attempting to do so they were driven back and pursued by a furious mob, whose leaders then rang the bells of a neighbouring monastery to gather a greater concourse. To this a heated explanation was given of the intended outrage, and all knowing at whose instigation the attempt was made to remove the ikon, the archbishop was denounced as a heretic and his death was demanded. A savage and hot-brained crowd howling for vengeance, then poured from the gate of St. Barbara

along the road to the Donskoi monastery where the archbishop was, when breaking down its gates they rushed, wild eyed and greedy for blood, through the great cloisters and cells, until reaching the church they saw him celebrating Mass, when heedless of the sacredness of the place and of the ceremony in which he was engaged, they rushed upon him with a fierce cry, flung him to the floor, stabbed and trampled on him, and dragged his dead body out into the road, where they left it disfigured and stained in the dust.

Then hurrying back to the city they plundered his house, and running from thence, broke into the Daniilofskoi monastery, which had been made into a hospital, and drove the patients out; after which by a like insane impulse they liberated those who were being kept in quarantine. The contents of a wine cellar into which they broke gave a fresh fury to their madness, so that when they were brought face to face with a company of carbineers and hussars, instead of dispersing they offered resistance, when two hundred and fifty of them were shot dead and over three hundred taken prisoners. But this was not brought about without losses on the side of those who sought to keep order, and among others the head of the police was killed.

It was on hearing of these disasters and disturbances that Gregory Orloff's spirit was roused, and seeing that a man of courage and strength was required in

this distracted city to enforce order, quell fanaticism, and insist on precautions, he volunteered to undertake these tasks. It was probable that in the early days of her love for him Catherine would not have consented to his facing the danger of infection, but now she sanctioned his intentions. Arriving at Moscow early in October 1771, he began the heavy and dangerous task before him with spirit and determination. The tumults of the mob were crushed and all assemblies forbidden; monasteries and convents were converted into hospitals to which the stricken were conveyed; cleanliness was insisted on, and the belongings of those who died were burned; travellers were compelled to remain in quarantine, and an efficient staff of medical men was inaugurated; Gregory Orloff personally visiting the sick and seeing that his orders were carried out. His energies being powerfully aided by the approach of winter, overcame the pestilence, the death rate grew less with each week, until in January 1772, after it had swept away over one hundred and thirty-two thousand people, it ceased.

On returning to St. Petersburg, Gregory Orloff was received as a hero; a medal was struck in his honour which bore his portrait with the figure of Curtius, together with the inscription, "Russia also has such sons"; while later the Empress in commemoration of his achievement erected a triumphal arch built of marble, which yet stands at the entrance of

the palace at Tsarskoe Selo, on which is carved the words, "Moscow delivered from the plague by Orloff." It was shortly after his return to the capital that, Russia and Turkey being heartily sick of war, a temporary cessation of hostilities was agreed to, and a treaty of peace suggested, for the consideration of which a congress was appointed to be held at Fokshiani, about sixteen miles north of Bukharest in Valakhia. At this Gregory Orloff desired to represent his Imperial Mistress, to which, though well knowing his unfitness for such a delicate post, she consented. He therefore set out for Fokshiani in the last week of July, with a guard of honour consisting of a company of hussars, and a suite of one hundred and sixty persons. On meeting the Turkish plenipotentiaries, his chief ambition seems to have been to dazzle them with the gorgeousness of his apparel, which consisting of cloth of gold, served as a background for the display of the jewelled insignia of the numerous orders of which he was a member, of the diamond framed portrait of the Empress, and of the precious stones that ornamented his sword hilt, his buckles, his epaulets, and served as buttons, until his person blazed like a sun.

When it came to business his lack of tact and intelligence made themselves unhappily felt, he completely ignored the carefully written instructions drawn up for him by her Majesty and Count Panin; openly

quarrelled with one of the Russian generals present, and by his blustering words and hectoring air, led the patient and gentle Turk to believe that he had no desire for peace or goodwill. The result was what might have been expected, for the negotiations ended by leaving two great Powers still at enmity. Quite indifferent to the thousands of lives which as a consequence might be sacrificed, Gregory Orloff held receptions and gave balls, that for splendour and extravagance rivalled those of the Court of St. Petersburg.

While one of these was being held on a sultry night in August, a messenger covered with dust and near dead from fatigue, who had demanded immediate admittance to his august presence, put a crumpled letter into his hand. Hurriedly tearing it open he read the contents with startling amazement. Had any other save one of his brothers assured him that a new favourite had supplanted him in the favour of the Empress, he would not have believed it. Blind with rage at the idea that when he had reached the highest point of his glory, he was threatened with the loss of his position as first man in the empire, the determined to hurry back fast as horses could carry him and regain it. That which he had held supreme for ten years in spite of his infidelities, could not, he believed be lost to him. Without waiting to speed his parting guests, to make preparations for his journey back of a thousand leagues, to take with him

his guard of honour or his numerous suite, or even to change his splendid dress, he jumped into a waiting carriage and set out for St. Petersburg through the breathless night, under the watchful stars.

What had happened at the Court might have been anticipated by a man less certain of his power over the Empress, or more foreseeing than himself. For a long time past many of his fellow-conspirators, chief among them being Count Panin and Prince Baratinski, had winced under the superior authority exercised by Gregory Orloff, and had envied the high rewards, the abundant honours heaped upon him, which they considered out of all proportion to the services he had rendered ; and to oust him from his post as favourite became their eager desire, their secret endeavour. Once before had they brought a young man remarkable for his fine appearance under the notice of Catherine, who had graciously smiled on him and probably would have admitted him to her favour had not Gregory and Alexis Orloff, who had no desire to see it taken from themselves, and who were like all the brothers of this family thoroughly united, frightened their rival by threats, so that preferring safety and seclusion to imminent danger in high places, he had again sunk into the obscurity from which for a moment fate had taken him.

Since that time Gregory Orloff had not only shown that indifference to the Empress which resulted from

a belief in his certainty of her affections, but had given her many rivals in all classes of life. This, coupled with the fact that although physically he was superb, mentally he was a blank, that his manners savoured of the barracks, and that his thirst for wine was great, had begun to cool the ardour of a woman who was intellectual, and a hater of intemperance. For these reasons she was now inclined to look with appreciation on the young sub-lieutenant of the guards named Vassiltshikof who had been presented to her by Prince Baratinski. Of medium height and inclined to stoutness, his appearance was in no way distinguished ; while his dark complexion, thick black hair growing to a peak on his low forehead, and sombre eyes made him seem older than his age warranted ; he being then twenty-eight, or little more than half of Catherine's years at the time they met. So far as intelligence went he was on a level with Gregory Orloff, but unlike him Vassiltshikof was gentle and retiring, was extremely docile, had little experience of Courts, and no skill in intrigue. His origin was, however, far superior to that of the Orloffs, for in the sixteenth century a woman of his house had wedded a Czar, and another had become a member of the illustrious family of Tolstoi.

While at her summer residence of Tsarskoe Selo the Empress gave him the first hint of her regard by sending him a box of gold, which was nominally a reward for having kept such good order among the

Catherine II. Alexieffna.
Impératrice de Russie,
à l'âge de 34 ans.

troops. Later as Frederick the Great learned from the correspondence of his Minister at Catherine's Court, "a sort of eagerness on her part to distinguish him in the crowd, the much greater ease and gaiety that she has had since her former favourite's departure, the ill-humour and discontent of the relations and friends of the latter—in short a thousand other little details have at last opened the courtiers' eyes." Within a couple of weeks of the departure of Gregory Orloff, the new favourite was appointed a Gentleman of the Bedchamber, given apartments in the royal palace, loaded with presents, and treated in public by the Empress as Castera tells us, "with a familiarity that easily betrayed the understanding which subsisted between them."

Hiring, or if necessary taking by force, the relays of horses he required, Gregory Orloff travelled by day and night to St. Petersburg, snatching food where it could be obtained, and gaining such sleep as the jolting of his carriage over ill-made roads permitted. Still persuaded that he had only to appear and conquer, to set his magnificent presence beside that of Vassiltshikof in order to oust him from his position as favourite, he was almost in sight of the capital when an officer of the guards with a score of men at his back, rode across the traveller's path and stopped the furious gallop of his horses. As they drew up the officer handed him an Imperial request to retire to

his castle of Gatshina, a splendid residence which he had built within ten miles of the Imperial Summer Palace of Tsarskoe Selo. As this order was backed by a line of glittering horsemen, there was no alternative for him but to obey, and he immediately set out for the country residence named. Knowing his stormy temper, his strength, and his recklessness, this obedience was probably more than her Majesty expected of him; for on the chance of his coming to the palace she had ordered a double guard to be stationed at all its entrances, as well as at that leading to the apartments of the favourite, the locks of all the doors—of which Gregory Orloff had a key—having been changed.

The docility which the late favourite had shown in retiring to Gatshina, was not followed by obedience to other commands of her Majesty; for when she desired him to resign his offices as Grand Master of the Artillery, head of the Horse Guards, Director of the Body of Engineers, Director in Chief of the Fortifications, President of the Bureau of Colonisation, and Member of the Senate, he refused. In return she issued an ukase which deprived him of them, and turned a deaf ear to his repeated importunities to be admitted to her presence. Nay, she even sent for her portrait, but this he declined to return, though he forwarded to her the diamond frame in which it was set. This act, which he knew would appeal to the

romance of Catherine's heart, softened it towards him. Writing him a letter, tempered with much of her old tenderness, she begged that he would no longer persist in his endeavours to see her, as an interview could only result in painful and useless explanations, but that he should absent himself from the Court for a year, during which time they would find "mutual repose." He was free to spend these twelve months in travelling abroad if he pleased, or he might settle on one of his country estates, or at Moscow where he would be permitted to make use of the Imperial equipages. More than all, she promised to allow him one hundred and fifty thousand roubles a year, to send him the valuable furniture and ornaments in his apartments in the palace, which with a hundred thousand roubles would furnish a house, and as a mere item she also presented him with a hundred thousand serfs.

Letters containing pleadings, demands, negotiations, passed between them for months, occupying and agitating the Empress so much that she declared herself unable to attend to affairs of State. Though she assured him these gifts were made him in remembrance of all she owed him and his family, it is more probable that they were offerings intended to pacify and conciliate him and his brethren; for she had ever before her the dread of being flung from the throne she had usurped, and feared that the Orloff

family—now more powerful than at the period of the insurrection because of the positions in which she had placed them—might endeavour to put her son in her place. This feeling must have been strengthened if there was any truth in the statement made by the French Minister, that she discovered that more than a thousand men in the guards were in the private pay of the late favourite and that he had also won over the archbishops. "It appears that he has two millions of roubles sterling, so that the Empress fears him and prefers to act gently," he adds.

Her dread of Gregory Orloff at this time was so great that, on a rumour being spread at one of the Court masked balls that he was present, she instantly quitted the scene and took refuge in the rooms of Count Panin. To appear at Court unexpectedly, suddenly, was what Gregory Orloff ultimately did. A breathless silence fell on all one evening as his noble figure and handsome face passed through groups of astonished and frowning courtiers, and every eye was turned on him as he approached the Sovereign. Though her astonishment was not less than theirs, her consternation greater, she who was always calmest in moments of distress, showed no sign of timidity, no sign of anger at his defiance of her orders, no sign of pleasure which woman like she must have secretly felt at the boldness of a lover ; but greeted him in a friendly manner as if there were nothing unusual in

his being there, and then entered into conversation with him on matters of indifference to both. If alarmed lest his jealousy might seek vengeance on the new favourite, she was soon convinced of its needlessness, for he hailed Vassiltshikof with the affectionate warmth of a comrade. At that not only she but the Court breathed freely once more, and scores of its minions hurried forward and enthusiastically assured him of their friendship and their delight at his return.

His amity towards his successor continued, not a shadow of jealousy crossing his characteristic good humour. Nor was it checquered by the fact that he was not reinstated in his former position of favourite, though he was given back the high posts he recently had held without possessing any of the qualifications necessary for them. That he would again become favourite seemed more probable from the fact that Vassiltshikof, who had neither force of character nor ambition, took no part in the management of affairs of State, held no high post in the army, the navy, or the government, had no influence at Court, and in general was treated as a child ; for he was seldom permitted to leave the palace save in the company of the Empress, or to receive his friends ; while on his asking her Majesty to grant him the Order of St. Anne, she had merely shaken her head, and next day by way of compensating him

for his disappointment, filled his pocket with notes to the amount of thirty thousand roubles.

Gregory Orloff himself behaved in a manner that must have disgusted the Empress, for he brawled in wine shops, caroused with the commonest women in the city, gambled, and as Castera says, "instead of maintaining a household with grandeur and magnificence, he led the life of an officer of the garrison, and ate almost always with the commensals of the Court who kept very ordinary cheer." For all that he continued to be a person of importance at the palace, and to exercise his former sway there in all ways but one; and when, in the early part of the summer of 1773, her Majesty went to her palace of Tsarskoe Selo, he was included in her suite. Not only that, but she consented to pay him a return visit at his castle of Gatshina. It was here, under the roof of her former lover, that her Majesty welcomed to Russia the young girl who was to become the wife of the Grand Duke Paul.

As the latter was now in his twentieth year, it was considered time that he should marry. The selection of a bride for him was a matter of much concern to Catherine who, remembering the part she had played as a Grand Duchess, was anxious that her son should wed a young woman of limited intellect and satisfactory dulness. Her glance fell upon Germany whose daughters, like herself, were then as now accommodat-

ingly ready to make heroic sacrifices on behalf of their impoverished families; and in abjuring their own faith in favour of another, to abandon the prospect of an eternal crown in favour of the fleeting joys of Russian roubles. Of such as these were the three plump daughters of the Landgrave of Hesse-Darmstadt, who were invited to the Court of St. Petersburg for inspection, the expenses of their journey being forwarded in advance.

Eagerly and with ardent hope they accepted the invitation; nor were they unduly delayed from setting out immediately by the time occupied in packing their trunks, the emptiness of which amazed Catherine, who generously supplied them with what was needful for their appearance at her Court. The three Princesses were not Graces, but substantial damsels, flaxen-haired and blue-eyed, with blunt features and bad complexions. On their arrival with their mother at St. Petersburg, in June 1773, they were dispatched to Gatshina, where they had the happiness of meeting the Empress, and of being presented to her lovers and her son. After keeping them under observation for some weeks, her Majesty's choice of a daughter-in-law fell on the Princess Wilhelmina. The selection could scarcely have been made because of the girl's beauty; for Sir Nathaniel Wraxall states that he "rarely beheld a young person less favoured by nature." He adds that she had a scorbutic humour in her face which in-

dicated neither intelligence nor dignity. It must, however, be admitted that she was found to be amiable, a word frequently used to describe a colourless character and a vacant mind.

Her abilities to grasp and to adopt the dogmas of a faith, the profession of which was the first step in her earthly grandeur, were considerable ; for by August she was ready to abjure publicly the errors of the Lutheran religion, and to accept the teachings of the Orthodox Greek Church, into which she was admitted by the Archbishop of St. Petersburg, and received in baptism the names of Natalia Alexievna. On the following day in the chapel at the Summer Palace the ceremony of her betrothal to the Grand Duke Paul took place ; when the same archbishop having solemnly blessed two rings, presented one to the Princess, and the other to the Grand Duke ; they in turn giving them to the Empress, who handed Wilhelmina's to Paul, and his to Wilhelmina ; after which Mass was celebrated. A reception was then held when the nobles and the Foreign Ministers kissed the hands of the Empress, the Grand Duke, and that of his bride elect ; after which her Majesty attended by the whole Court adjourned to the great salon where, seated on a throne and attended by the great officers of the Household, she dined with the Grand Duke and the Princess, in presence of the four first classes of the nobility, who were served at tables according to their

rank. The evening ended with a display of fireworks in the gardens, and the illumination of the ships by the quays. About two months later, October 10th, the marriage of these young people took place in the church of Our Lady of Kassanskoy with all possible magnificence, and was followed by festivities that lasted a week.

The Landgravine of Hesse-Darmstadt and her two remaining unmarried daughters were loaded with presents and sent back to Germany ; but not before one of them had caused some commotion in the breasts of foreign Ministers and others. Possibly to strengthen his influence with her Majesty, Gregory Orloff was suspected, as the Prussian Minister wrote to Frederick II., of "carrying his ambitious views to the point of desiring to marry one of the Princesses of Hesse-Darmstadt. The extraordinary attentions, for him, which he pays to the Landgravine, and the freedom of manner with which he treats the Princesses, especially the younger to whom he pays open attention, increase these suspicions." The alarmed Count de Solms adds that "the vivacity of this Princess might well, without imagining any harm, afford to this ambitious man the means of succeeding." But like Elizabeth of England, Catherine dreaded the idea of one of her lovers marrying, and for this reason and others the Princesses were promptly bustled out of Russia.

Another desire of Gregory Orloff's at this time

was left unfulfilled. Aware that he was disliked by Count Panin, who had brought forward the new favourite, he demanded Panin's dismissal from his post as Minister of Foreign Affairs, now that his office as Governor to the Grand Duke had come to an end. But Catherine knowing that Panin was one of the ablest men in her service, and dreading that if dismissed from it, he might use his influence and talent to place her son on the throne, refused to listen to Gregory Orloff; and much to his chagrin rained favours on Panin; for she not only confirmed him in his position as Minister for Foreign Affairs, but gave him an estate valued at about seven thousand pounds a year, a life pension of the same sum, together with the choice of any house in St. Petersburg to be purchased for his residence, and four thousand pounds to buy plate and furniture for it. To the other officers of the Grand Duke's Household she was equally generous.

The remainder of the brief life of the Grand Duchess may be related in a few sentences. Castera is responsible for the statement that she had eyes of admiration for another man than her husband, who though kind was ugly. Than the Grand Duke's friend, the companion of his boyhood, Andrew Razumovsky son of Count Cyril, there were few handsomer men at Court. His acquaintance with her had begun before she had seen her husband, and

when this gallant man, who was a naval officer, had command of the frigate which brought her from Lubeck to Cronstadt. That she should look on him with favour was not so remarkable as that he should return the feeling for one so plain; an explanation for which must be found in the attraction of opposites. Skilled in the art of intrigue, Catherine quickly discovered what another without manifold experiences would not have observed, hints of which she gave her son. But like so many excellent husbands, he was unwilling to believe that his wife merited suspicion, or that his friend could betray him. That in her innocence she might not incur censure, he bade her be more reserved in her conduct at a Court where scandal was commonplace. Accepting his kindly hint, she became more careful of appearances and confined the expression of her affection to her correspondence. And not unwilling to see herself the Consort of a Czar, she also listened to airy schemes for the dethronement of her mother-in-law. However, before either her love or her ambition had opportunity to develop, the time arrived when it was hoped she would give an heir to the throne.

After days of intense suffering a dead child was born to her; and the medical men who attended her declared that she would never again be able to give birth to a child. That an heir was not to be expected of her gave grave concern to Catherine,

who summoned a private council to advise on the subject; the outcome of which was that it was decided to sacrifice the Grand Duchess in the interests of the empire. Before this was done it was thought necessary to acquaint the Grand Duke with the resolution and gain his consent to its being carried out. On hearing of it he was filled with horror, but persuasions being backed by a sight of Andrew Razumovsky's letters to the Grand Duchess taken from her bureau, ultimately brought him to agree to her death. The method of this was left to the doctors, who quietly and painlessly performed their task of executioners, when on April 26th, 1776, Natalia Alexievna's young life was put out with the ease and unconcern with which the flame of a candle is extinguished.

The details of this story were related "without delicacy or reserve" to Sir Nathaniel Wraxall, by cousins of the victim, the Princes of Hesse-Philipstahl, whom he met at Vienna; while circumstantial evidence as to its truth is found in the fact that the midwife, who attended the Grand Duchess, became suddenly wealthy and was seen to be on familiar terms with her Majesty, with whom she sometimes had the honour of dining; and that Andrew Razumovsky, whom Paul wished to have exiled to Siberia, but whom Catherine desired to be spared on account of his father's devotion to herself, was sent as Envoy to Venice.

Scarcely had the Grand Duchess been laid with splendid ceremonies in her tomb, than the Empress—whose grief, according to her own statement which she was not anxious that Grimm should keep secret, was so great that she could neither sleep, eat, nor drink,—looked about for another bride for her son, who in fulfilling the duties required of her, would not necessitate the trouble of being dispatched to a better world. There seemed no more suitable person than the Princess Sophia of Wurtemburg, a niece of the King of Prussia. That she had fallen in love with and had engaged herself to the Hereditary Prince of Hesse-Darmstadt, brother of the late Grand Duchess, was not considered an obstacle to her becoming the wife of Paul; for it was expected of her that she would change her choice in husbands as readily as she would change her creed. On the selection of the Empress being made known to Frederick, he in his eagerness to strengthen the friendship between Prussia and Russia cordially approved of it, and immediately undertook to break the engagement existing between the lovers. In sending word of this to the Court of St. Petersburg, he invited the Grand Duke to Berlin, that he might see his future wife and give her the opportunity of seeing his Imperial Highness. To this Catherine consented, and attended by a splendid suite Paul started for Berlin in June 1776.

His entry into that city on the 21st of the month was attended with the pomp and magnificence which Frederick delighted at times to display, though its expenditure must have sorely grieved a monarch who, concerning himself about everything, was accustomed when entertaining visitors to enter into the minutest detail of the expenses of the table, prescribing the number and quality of each dish, as well as the size and quality of the candles to be burned on the occasion ; and who as we are told by the English Minister then at his Court, had given secret orders during the recent war "to several of his army surgeons, rather to run the risk of a wounded soldier's dying, than by the amputation of a limb, to increase the number and expenses of his invalids." Under triumphal arches and through streets bright with flowers and bunting, came four and twenty postilions sounding their horns, after which followed the company of butchers, the company of archers, and the company of merchants, "distinguished by the elegance of their uniform." Then came coaches, each drawn by eight horses; a detachment of the life guards ; generals, field-marshals, chamberlains, magistrates, the King's brother, Prince Henry of Prussia, and a guard of honour consisting of a hundred infantry. Cannons were fired, bugles were blown, and at a certain point in the route, seventy maidens dressed as nymphs and shepherdesses presented garlands of flowers and amorous verses to the

Grand Duke, as he sat wondering and with lowering brows in his gilded carriage. At the principal entrance to the palace Frederick, in his least threadbare uniform, with his artificial locks flowing to the shoulders met his guest "who accosted him," as Castera says, with a speech which as given, it is to be hoped neither man nor parrot ever uttered. In this the bride elect was referred to as "that boon for which I have been ardently wishing so long"; while Frederick was declared to be "the greatest of heroes, the admiration of our age, and the astonishment of posterity"; at which point he was timely interrupted by the monarch who said that instead of all that, "you behold my prince, a hoary-headed valetudinarian, who could never have wished for a superior happiness than that of welcoming within my walls the hopeful heir of a mighty empire, the only son of my best friend, the great Catherine." Only a few weeks previously his Majesty's real opinion of the great Catherine had been expressed in an anonymous letter which he had caused to be printed and circulated throughout Berlin, in which her weaknesses were dwelt on with a frankness that amused when it ought to have shocked.

The Grand Duke was then led to the great drawing-room where the Queen of Prussia, the Princess of Wurtemburg, the ladies of the Court, and the Foreign Ministers awaited him. The bride elect must have

looked forward with anxiety to the moment which gave her the first sight of the man to whom she had been made over without choice or will of her own, and who was to take the place of the man she loved. His Imperial Highness, small and thin, with flat nose, retreating forehead, and furtive eyes cannot have reassured her as regarded her future happiness ; while as for him, although he saw in her a tall, somewhat stout girl, with a good-looking face and submissive manner, it was evident from his subsequent treatment of her, that from the first she did not inspire him with affection. That evening a grand concert was given at Court, one item of which was written by his Prussian Majesty who was sufficiently gifted to do all things save gain the respect or affection of his subjects. While some days previous to the arrival of the Grand Duke, the inspiration of Frederick the Great was being rehearsed, an Italian singer named Mara had ventured to say that its composer "understood more of soldiery than notes," for which act of *lèse majesté* he was by Royal command handed over to the corps de garde, who had instructions to correct him. As no mode of punishment was specified each soldier inflicted that which seemed best to him. Putting him into a uniform they gave him the heaviest firelock they could find, with which they made him go through military exercises, any fault being punished severely with a cane. This continued

After a picture by H. Benner.

THE GRAND DUCHESS MARIA FEODOROVNA,
Afterwards Empress, wife of Paul I.

for two hours after which, supposing it had induced him to merriment, they made him sing and dance for two hours more, and finally calling a surgeon, had him relieved of a quantity of blood, when in a state of collapse he was sent back to his distracted wife.

On the day succeeding the arrival of the Grand Duke at the Court of Berlin, the Foreign Ministers were presented to him, and in the evening he witnessed a French play. On the next day Prince Henry of Prussia on behalf of the Czarina, formally demanded the hand of the Princess of Wurtemburg in marriage for the Grand Duke, when she uttering the assent required of her, their engagement took place. For the next few days entertainments of various kinds were given at Charlottenburg, at Potsdam, and at Sans Souci in honour of the betrothal ; during which time Frederick took excessive pains to please, not only the Grand Duke but the influential members of his suite, not one of whom, the English Minister says, "will return to Petersburg without being infatuated with his affability and goodness. In this properly consists the magnificence of their reception ; for as to all that has been made the subject of my uncyphered dispatch, nothing can be conceived so trumpery and sordid. His Prussian Majesty knows this and laughs at it ; sure from his own reputation and from the minds on which he has to operate, that

a smile from him will have more effect than the expending all the money in his coffers." The same authority says that the Grand Duke's bearing gained him the good will neither of the people nor of the nobility. "He received all the acts of homage they did him as if they were his due, and at his levèe took not the smallest pains to be affable. His donations, too, were exceedingly below par; a disappointment the more felt as their ideas were raised very high here of Russian magnificence, and valuable presents as much expected as wanted. Marshal Romanzow spoke very freely to the Grand Duke on this subject; but whether his Imperial Highness is naturally economical or whether he was limited by the Czarina, it produced no effect except a great coolness between the Prince and his adviser."

On the other hand, and to the wonder of all, Frederick showed much generosity, for when his guest left Berlin on August 3rd, he was presented by the King with a coffee service, and a dessert service, a couple of Prussian horses, four pieces of tapestry, and a portrait of himself set with diamonds to the value of twenty thousand pounds. The Princess of Wurtemburg followed the Grand Duke to St. Petersburg a few weeks later. The time was amazingly short which it took to convince her of the truth of the Greek Orthodox Church, and to instruct her in its doctrines; for in October she was received into

its fold under the names of Maria Feodorovna, and was married to the Grand Duke with the usual impressive ceremonies. Four sons and five daughters were born to them. Of the former, two ascended the Russian throne, Alexander and Nicholas, the latter of whom was the great-grandfather of the present Czar.

CHAPTER XI

Catherine's difficult task—Her endeavours to civilise her subjects —She invites foreigners to Russia—Has translations made of famous works—Writes a code of instructions for the administration of the laws—She is flattered by Frederick the Great and by Voltaire—She employs the French philosopher —The beginnings of Friedrich Melchior von Grimm—He journeys to Russia and is received by the Empress—He returns to Paris and becomes a correspondent of Catherine's —Denis Diderot is brought to her Majesty's notice—She purchases his library and grants him a pension—He visits the Court of St. Petersburg—His intimate conversations with the Czarina—The purchase of Voltaire's library—The Empress collects famous pictures—The Hermitage—Her passion for building—Glimpses of her inner life—How her days were passed—The splendour of her Court—Masquerade balls—Dinners with her officers—Her evenings at the Hermitage—Ceremony is thrown overboard—A Court buffoon.

ON coming to the throne Catherine, who had spent the first fifteen years of her life in a civilised country, and who during the compulsory solitude of her succeeding eighteen years had read works of philosophy and travel, history and biography, found herself the supreme sovereign of a barbarous empire slowly and reluctantly emerging from the darkness of ignorance, encrusted with habits of cruelty, and jealous of all innovations. Wide minded, in-

telligent and courageous, she determined to enlighten and to civilise this world of chaos over which she reigned, not only for the benefit of her people, but for the glory of her name. From the first it was plain to her that this giant task must be undertaken by herself, not only unaided, but against the prejudices of a people naturally indolent, haters of innovations, suspicious of foreigners ; against nobles who despising all learning, could with few exceptions neither write nor read, and who tenacious of their power for life or death over their serfs, looked with hostility on changes that might undermine it or their ancient privileges ; against the priesthood who were watchful of encroachments on their control ; against counsellors and ministers who were greedy for themselves and indifferent to the masses ; and with the fear for ever before her eyes of a mutinous army.

A woman of less spirit, ambition, and resolution must have quailed before such a task but she did not flinch ; and beginning at an early date she issued a circular letter which was translated into all languages and distributed in all countries, inviting foreigners to visit Russia, which was then an almost unknown country. Later on she despatched such learned men as the empire could boast of into the remoter and almost unknown regions of her vast dominions, to determine the geographical position of their principal places, to examine into the natural products of the soil, and

of the mines, and to report on the conditions, manners, and habits of the inhabitants. Learned men from almost every country in Europe, as well as sculptors and painters, were invited to take up their residence in St. Petersburg, with promises of great rewards ; an annual sum of five thousand roubles was devoted to the translation of famous foreign works into the Russian language ; the pupils of the Academy of Arts who distinguished themselves were rewarded by being sent to travel all over Europe for three years ; and on it becoming known that in 1769 the planet Venus would transit the sun, she applied to the Royal Society of London for the necessary instruments, and had observatories erected in various parts of the empire, which were placed at the disposal of astronomers, who flocked to them from every part of the world.

Among other beneficent works she planted colonies, founded schools, built hospitals, corrected the abuses of the tribunals, and drew up a code of instructions for the administration of the laws. Than the latter no greater boon could have been conferred on the country. The intricate and ancient code which had been framed by the Czar Alexey Michailovitch (1645-1676) had been added to by various of his successors, who introduced what laws prejudice, tyranny, or capriciousness suggested, the result being that they were found contradictory, perplexing, and wholly irreconcilable ; in

some cases brutal, in others inefficient ; the whole of them being loaded with precedents, which made them bewildering to all who endeavoured to understand or administer them. It was therefore possible to protract cases indefinitely, and to terminate them without justice at the will of some venial judge ; who, if not bribed, frequently sent those on trial to the torture chamber to extort confessions, condemned them to be knouted, or banished them to Siberia.

To simplify these laws and to introduce a more impartial exercise of them was the heavy task to which Catherine set herself, and in which she was chiefly aided by the philosophers she had studied. When the work of many months was finished she, who said that laws should be considered only as a means of conducing to the greater happiness of mankind, and that the nation should be consulted in the framing of them, invited deputies from all parts even the most remote of the immense empire, to assemble at Moscow, and give their free and unbiased opinions on the suitability of the instructions which she had written. Such liberality at the present day in Russia would amaze all Europe ; the effect produced by it a century and a half ago can scarcely be imagined. In the summer of 1767 deputies arrived in great numbers at the ancient capital, many of them differing from each other in dress and in language, but all agreed in their wonder at being asked to

express their views on laws which the arbitrary will of autocrats had given them.

That they might be quite free to speak their minds, the Empress did not appear at the assembly, but concealed in a gallery listened while her Instructions were read out. Their unexpected humanity and justness were received with thunders of applause. One section alone of them met with mixed feelings; for that which hinted at the liberation of the unhappy serfs was resented by the nobles, whose revenues must suffer by such liberality; and some of them stated that they would stab the first man who dared to vote for the affranchisement of their vassals. At the end of the sittings Catherine was lauded above all women, and entreated to take henceforth the titles "Great, Wise, Prudent, and Mother of her Country." Her answer to this, charming in its humility, was ready. If, she stated, she had rendered herself worthy of the first, it belonged to posterity to confer it upon her; wisdom and prudence were the gifts of heaven, for which she daily gave thanks without presuming to derive any merit from them herself; and lastly the title of Mother of the Country was the most dear of all in her eyes, the only one she could accept, and which she regarded as the most benign and glorious recompense for her labours and solicitude on behalf of a people she loved. To each deputy present, Catherine gave a gold medal, struck for the purpose

of reminding themselves and their descendants of the wise and liberal purpose for which she had called them together ; but it is characteristic of the greed of the Russian people, that scarcely had they received the medals than they hurried to the goldsmiths to dispose of them. Though this action must have vexed it could hardly have surprised her, for she knew the spirit of her subjects ; and bearing it in mind she raised the salaries of the magistrates and judges all over the empire, in the hope of remedying their proverbial dishonesty. "Indigence may perhaps hitherto have given you a propensity to self-interest," she mildly said to them, "but now that the country rewards your labours, what might heretofore have been pardonable, will henceforward be criminal."

As her Majesty was not a woman to hide her achievements from the sight of men, she had copies of her Instructions, of which she was intensely proud, sent to several of the crowned heads of Europe. From none of them did she receive such flattering encomiums as from Frederick II., who now her ally was eager to stand well with her. Her Instructions, he said, was a masculine performance worthy of a great man ; it had "but few examples in the world." Semiramis had commanded armies, Elizabeth of England had been considered a good politician, but the glory of being a legislatrix had been reserved for the Empress of Russia. "The ancient Greeks," continued this

honey-tongued monarch, "who were all appreciators of merit, in their deifications of great men, assigned the first place to legislators whom they deemed the true benefactors of the human race. They would have placed your Imperial Majesty between Lycurgus and Solon."

More flattering and sweeter still to her ears were the laudations of Voltaire, whose platitudes regarding herself and his glowing presentment of her to his followers, were cheaply bought at the expense of rich furs, frothy homage, and thousands of roubles. Already a correspondent of her predecessor Elizabeth, Voltaire had begun to exchange letters with Catherine two years after she had gained the throne. An admirer of his shoddy philosophy, regarding his mental squibs as emanations from an all-illuminating sun, she who venerated ikons and went on pilgrimages to shrines, desired to enter into communication with one who denied Providence and deified materialism, because as she assured him, "it was good and useful to have such acquaintances." One source of Voltaire's usefulness was found in employing him to write plausible pamphlets in justification of her schemes, such as her war with the Turks, "the common enemy of all Christians," or her annexation of unhappy Poland. The means by which this was accomplished was simplicity itself as explained by Voltaire. "I have only to pocket the thousand ducats and dip my pen in

ink," wrote the philosopher. It was no wonder that he now found her the chief person in the world, the instructor of philosophers, more learned than all the academies, the fire and soul of nations, the admired of Europe, whose empire was above all empires, whose law was above all laws, whose code was the gospel of the world. Though writing this to her and receiving an equivalent, he described her to his friends as a cat; while on the other hand she invited him to St. Petersburg, with promises of a reception worthy of his genius, and then wrote to their common friend, Grimm, begging him for Heaven's sake to urge Voltaire to remain in Paris.

She had before entering into correspondence with Voltaire, exchanged many missives with the individual just named, Friedrich Melchior Von Grimm, who a German by birth made Paris his residence. To that capital he had in the beginning of his career accompanied Count Schonberg as tutor to his sons, and afterwards became reader to the Hereditary Prince of Saxe-Gotha. By degrees he made acquaintance with the principal thinkers of the day; with Voltaire, Diderot, D'Alembert, Jean Jacques Rousseau, and Volney, but unlike them he can scarcely be said to have been a literary man, but rather a writer of a couple of pamphlets, a delightful gossip, a man whose little soul expanded in the atmosphere of Royalty. He therefore found his true vocation when he was asked

by the Abbé Reynal to assist him in carrying on his correspondence with several German sovereigns. After a while this Correspondance Littéraire, which dealt not only with literature but with art, politics, and the personalities of distinguished people, was conducted by Grimm exclusively with six sovereigns, among whom were Catherine, who paid him fifteen hundred roubles a year for his letters, Stanislaus Augustus of Poland who gave him four hundred roubles, and Frederick the Great who accepted them without awarding him a penny in return.

Desiring to become personally acquainted with Catherine, Grimm managed to get himself included in the suite of the unfortunate Princess of Hesse-Darmstadt when she went to Russia in 1773 to marry the Grand Duke. One reason for his undertaking this journey was his passionate love of Courts, for as Catherine told him much later, he "was never happier than when he was by, near, beside, before, or behind some Highness"; but another motive was his desire to become the special correspondent of her Majesty as well as her agent, who would execute whatever commissions she desired to have transacted for her in Paris. As his letters to Royalty had become not only tiresome but unprofitable, he urged his wishes for employment in her Majesty's service as strongly as permissible, but although in departing from the Court of St. Petersburg he was authorised to write to her,

it was not until he had paid her a second visit, journeying to Russia once more in the train of a future Grand Duchess, that creeping into her Majesty's favour by his adroitness, his entertaining conversation, his subtle flatteries, he gained the post he coveted, and returned to Paris her acknowledged agent, with the rank of a colonel in her army, and a salary of two thousand roubles a year. In this way he became not only her fag, as she termed him, but her intimate correspondent who, as she also said, understood her better than any one else, and to whom she wrote as she had never written to another. To him her letters became the only good, the single ornament of his life, the pivot on which his happiness turned ; but to the historian they have become much more, for to them he is indebted for many interesting glances into her Majesty's life, for many little displays of a character at once complex, contradictory, and interesting. Covering a space of over twenty-five years, they may be found in Grimm's *Mémoire Historique sur l'origine et les suites de mon attachment pour l'Impératrice Catherine II. ;* and in *Catherine's Correspondence with Grimm*, which have been published in the Collections of the Russian Imperial Historical Society and translated into French.

It was probably Friedrich Melchior von Grimm that introduced to her Majesty's notice Denis Diderot, a central figure in the group of literary men in Paris

who have left their mark on the annals of the eighteenth century. From the harmless occupation of a booksellers' hack he had risen to attack revealed religion in various pamphlets, and then to project the immense undertaking of publishing the *Dictionnaire Encyclopédique*, which was to contain articles by various distinguished writers on what were called the new ideas, whose exposition was intended to uproot Christianity, and that certainly had some considerable part in bringing about the French Revolution. To these volumes which were published by subscription, Catherine who delighted in getting her knowledge ready made and compact from encyclopædias, subscribed, and became interested in their originator and editor. Diderot's annual salary for twenty years, for work that entailed incessant application, anxiety, and disappointment, is said to have averaged one hundred and twenty pounds per annum. The time came when wishing to provide a dowry for his daughter, he resolved to sell his library. This being a period before Grimm became her agent, Catherine bade her representative at the French Court, Prince Galitzin, to enter into negotiation for its purchase with the owner. To come to the relief of such a man was an action which must attract to herself the eyes of all Europe, and gain for her the laudations of his contemporaries whose voices were powerful and helped to make history. Accordingly when she learned that Diderot

asked fifteen thousand francs she gave him sixteen thousand, equivalent to about one thousand pounds English money, adding a boon that must have been infinitely gratifying to the owner of the books, that they should remain where they were during his lifetime and that meanwhile, as their librarian, he should receive from her a thousand francs a year. That she bought the volumes for less than half their worth, and that at the time she had no place to put them, scarcely takes from her generosity.

His salary as librarian was duly paid for the first year (1765), and the second, and then stopped. If Catherine, whose expenses were immense, and who at this time had begun to think of retrenching, believed that Diderot, satisfied with the purchase of his library, would make no complaint of the cessation of his salary, she was mistaken ; for not only did he speak of his disappointment, but his cynical friends seized on the incident to dwell in print on the foolishness of those who put their trust in princes. This being fatal to the good reputation of a patroness of literature and a benefactress of literary men, Catherine by her munificence silenced the scoffers by sending Diderot a bill of exchange for twenty-five thousand francs, telling him that she was unwilling that the negligence of an official should cause any disturbance to her library, and that for that reason she would send him for twenty-five years in advance, the amount destined to

the maintenance and increase of her books, and at the expiration of that period she would take further measures.

On reading this Diderot's emotion reached the verge of hysterics. He would speak to her, he said, but his soul was overcome, his head was turned, his thoughts were confused, and he wept like a child ; but he could say to her that he knelt at her feet and reached out his arms to her who was his sovereign. Later he expressed a desire to visit his benefactress, not only that he might personally thank her, but that as the representative of the literary men in the West, he might offer her their homage. Accordingly in 1773 he reached St. Petersburg, at the time when his friend Grimm was also there. Diderot was graciously received by a sovereign who in private life was unceremonious and unconventional, and who, as she said to one of her correspondents, found it insupportable to have no equal. As an equal she was certainly treated by this thin-visaged, vain, and garrulous philosopher, after he had overcome the restraint of their first meeting, and she had made him more acceptable by presenting him with a richly embroidered suit which she begged he would exchange for the rusty black in which he had presented himself.

According to Castera, she talked to him every day after dinner for hours at a time on philosophy, legislation, politics, the principles of liberty, and the

rights of nations : he sitting beside her, and in his enthusiasm taking her by the hand, seizing her arm, or banging her knee with his fist, at which she took no offence. Nor did she seem to profit much by his liberal ideas, though they interested her. "He is a hundred years old in many respects," she said, "but in others he is no more than ten." At the end of five months, at the approach of winter, he thought of returning to Paris. It may be he would have done so before had he received the proofs of her appreciation which he expected, but these never were given to him. At last on the very eve of his departure from St. Petersburg he endeavoured to stir her memory, and requested that she would give him some memento of his visit, which he desired might have no other value save that it came from her ; while at the same time he hinted that though he represented the republic of letters at her court, it was too poor to defray his travelling expenses. In return she sent him three bags each containing one thousand roubles ; a gift that was far from satisfying his expectations.

After Diderot's death in 1784, his library arrived at St. Petersburg, where it was stored in the newly built Hermitage. There it adjoined Voltaire's seven thousand volumes, all of which he had annotated and most of which he had had bound in red morocco, which she also bought, much to the regret of the nephews of their late owner and to the French nation. From

the Hermitage they were subsequently removed to the Imperial Library, where a special room was built for them. Not satisfied with getting his books, Catherine would have got his body. "You ought to have sent it to me," she wrote to Grimm, "and I assure you he would have had the most costly tomb conceivable." Another library which later on she added to those of the French philosophers was that founded in Warsaw by the brothers Zaluskis, and added to during his troubled reign by Poniatowski, but which on his deposition she seized and had transferred to St. Petersburg.

Not satisfied with collecting books, she desired to acquire famous pictures, not only that she might gain the reputation of being a patroness of art, of which she confessed to know nothing, but that by this means she might cultivate the taste of her people who were still little better than barbarians.

As early as 1768 she purchased the splendid collection of pictures brought together by Count Heinrich von Brühl, Minister to the late King of Poland at Dresden; at a cost of one hundred and eighty thousand roubles, which even then was about half its value. Three years later she bought in Holland, the Braancamp collection, for which she gave sixty thousand ecus; but here she had not the value of her money, as the ship in which it was being conveyed to Russia sank on the Coast of Finland. In

the following year, 1772, she was more lucky in securing one of the rarest collections of pictures in France, which begun by Crozat, and added to by his descendants, was then known as the gallery of Baron de Thiers. This, bought through the friendly agency of Grimm for merely four hundred and sixty thousand francs, contained works by Raphael, Van Dyck, Rembrandt, Teniers, Poussin, Wouvermans, and other masters. A couple of months later she acquired pictures from the gallery of the Duc de Choiseul-Stainville ; while pictures once belonging to Counsellor Tronchin of Geneva, to the Prince de Conti, and Dezallier d'Argenville, were also secured by her. But perhaps the most valuable pictures she acquired were those, chiefly of the Italian school, collected during his life by Sir Robert Walpole, at a cost which has been estimated to vary between forty thousand and one hundred thousand pounds, but which his grandson sold for forty thousand pounds in 1779 to the Empress, the English Government considering that it could not afford to spend that sum on mere pictures. Lovers of art will not consider it necessary to sympathise with England on the loss of works by Guido Reni, nor will they regret that six examples of the sentimental Salvator Rosa, have been removed to distant Russia, but they will grudge to that country the Virgin with Partridges by Van Dyck, a Nativity by Murillo, and some of the best specimens of Rubens

which were contained in the Houghton collection, as it was called, from Houghton House in which they originally hung.

Among her contemporary painters who received commissions from the Empress were Sir Joshua Reynolds, Raphael Mengs, Angelica Kauffmann, Chardin, Vernet, Houdon, and Vien ; while she had copies made by Reiffenstein and Gunterberger of the Raphael frescoes in the Vatican. She also bought collections of engraved gems, of etchings, drawings, and prints ; nor did she exclude architecture from her patronage, one of the buildings which she caused to be erected being chiefly designed as a storehouse for those treasures which were the wealth and joy of the world, but for which she had no real appreciation. This, known as the Hermitage, which forms a complete wing of the Imperial Palace, was built in the florid or rococo style after designs by Rastrelli, included an immense picture gallery, two great reception-rooms, and two dining-rooms, flanked by a winter garden full of rare plants, of caged birds, and splashing fountains, and various smaller salons used for small social parties in which the Empress delighted. Later was added a theatre. This building which she called her little retreat, was but a short distance from her private apartments, and being always kept at an equal temperature, afforded her a pleasant place in which to take exercise in winter. Writing of it to

Grimm she tells him that it contains not only copies of the Raphael cartoons, and some of the most famous pictures in the world, but thirty-eight thousand books, four rooms filled with prints, ten thousand engraved gems, nearly ten thousand drawings, and a cabinet of natural history filling two large rooms.

In her passion for building, and her desire to see St. Petersburg a beautiful city, she swept away whole streets of the wooden houses, and rotting and miserable huts which had surprised her on her first entrance into the capital. Instead of them arose splendid palaces, stately houses, and public offices built of stone, or of coloured marbles from the quarries of Siberia. The canals formed by the islands on which the city was erected, whose banks had been staunched by timber, were now lined with granite, while they were connected by handsome bridges, and flanked with wide quays built of the same stone. Looking outside Russia for men capable of carrying her ideas into practice, she sent abroad for them. Those from France did not succeed in pleasing her, for the strange reason that "Frenchmen know too much, and make horrid houses inside and out because they know too much"; and she therefore wrote to Grimm to bid Reiffenstein, who was copying the Raphael cartoons for her at Rome to look out for two good architects, Italian by birth and skilled in their profession, who would enter into her service for so many years and

whom he will "send from Rome to St. Petersburg like a bundle of tools." It was also specified that he should select "honest and reasonable people who walk on the earth, not in the air." Gradually under her supervision and in accordance with her views of splendour, the city began to assume a stately and magnificent aspect; yet in 1779, after a reign of seventeen years spent in improving it, she told Grimm that her mania for building was as strong as ever, and assured him that no earthquake could demolish the structures she had raised, but she adds, "The mania of building is an infernal thing; it runs away with money, and the more one builds the more one wants to build; it is a disease like drunkenness." Her love of improvement and of building stretched far beyond the capital, and two years later than the above-mentioned date, she tells the same correspondent that she had built one hundred and forty-four towns for her subjects. She had done infinitely more difficult work than that at this time, 1781, for she had issued one hundred and twenty-three edicts on behalf of the people; instituted twenty-nine governments according to a new form; won seventy-eight victories; and made thirty treaties, in all wonderful work for a woman, and for the ruler of such an empire.

Glimpses of her inner life are given by the Reverend William Coxe, afterwards Archdeacon, who as travelling

tutor to Lord Herbert, visited Russia in 1778; by "an impartial observer" as quoted by the historian Castera; as well as by the foreign Ministers in their dispatches and correspondence. The chief characteristic in the existence of a woman whose strong hands grasped the reins of an empire so immense, whose strong brain kept in subjection a people so diverse, hitherto so insubordinate, and still at heart so savage, was its simplicity. Disliking personal attendance she dispensed with it as much as possible, and on rising at six in the morning winter or summer, she generally lit her own fire. Presently hot water and lumps of ice were brought to her, with which she washed away from her face the last traces of the rouge that had thickly covered it the previous night. Then passing into a small adjoining room, coffee strong and hot was brought in, of which she drank several cups, while at the same time she fed her dogs, English greyhounds that had been presented to her by Dr. Dimsdale, and who in due time produced a numerous family, some nine of which shared her Majesty's bedroom and were her inseparable companions.

Then began the work of the day, when secretaries read the letters addressed to her and received her answers, when she signed documents, gave orders, and busied herself with her private correspondence, which was dispatched to all parts of the world. At nine she returned to her bedroom

where, while her hair was being dressed and powdered, she received her aides-de-camp in waiting, and her Ministers, with whom she discussed State affairs and to whom she gave commissions and directions. At eleven she went to the chapel royal where she attended Mass, which ended at midday, when she visited her son and daughter-in-law or received their visits ; and then, at one o'clock sat down to dinner usually in the company of about ten guests, consisting of a lady of the bedchamber, a maid-of-honour, two or three of the nobility, the reigning favourite, and some of her Ministers. Three times in the week this number was added to by the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess. These meals were usually simple, and twice a week no meat appeared on the board. At all times the Empress ate little and drank less, and this, which was generally the only meal which she had in the day, never lasted more than an hour. If there was no council to attend, she was then free to retire to her own apartments, to drive abroad, to walk among her exotic plants in the winter garden, or her pictures at the Hermitage, to play with her white squirrel, or her favourite monkey, or to feed the rooks who were waiting anxiously for her in the garden. At six o'clock she was ready for the theatre, when she witnessed the performances of the company of Italian opera singers, of French comedians, or Russian players, whom she maintained at her own expense,

to which entertainments not only the Court, but a certain number of outsiders were admitted gratis. When there was a drawing-room in the evening she had a private party at cards, but she seldom supped, and invariably retired to her private apartments at ten.

On feast days the order of events was somewhat altered. Instead of the simple gown of grey or violet silk, loose-fitting, with wide sleeves and front open to show an undergown of the same material, in which she usually dressed to attend Mass, she attired herself in a robe of crimson velvet, a vest of gold brocade, on her breast the ribbons and jewelled insignia of many orders, on her head, the hair of which was drawn up and sprinkled with powder, a crown of priceless diamonds, her arms, her throat, her hands, blazing with the same stones. A procession was then formed to conduct her to the chapel royal, at the head of which walked the great officers of the household, followed by the mistress of the robes, the maids-of-honour, the ladies of the bedchamber, and various courtiers two and two, then the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess, and finally her Majesty, moving slowly and with impressive dignity, her head held high, her magnetic eyes watchful and glittering. Arriving at the chapel she heard Mass standing, as is the custom in the Greek Church, her son and her daughter-in-law at either side of her, the courtiers behind The return was made in the same

order to the great drawing-room, the passages to which were lined by soldiers of the foot guards, splendid men in green coats relieved by crimson cuffs and capes, white waistcoats and breeches, and silver helmets ornamented by immense plumes of red, white, black, and yellow feathers, and fastened under the chin with silver buckles.

In the drawing-room already awaited her the chief officers of State, the marshals, generals, and colonels of all the regiments in the army in their various uniforms, the Foreign Ministers in their Court suits, and the Russian nobles who rivalled each other in the gorgeous display of their jewels, for not only were their buttons and buckles composed of precious stones, but the hilts of their swords, their collars, their epaulets, their breasts scintillated with diamonds. At the morning drawing-rooms no ladies save those belonging to the Court made their appearance ; but all the men kissed the Empress's hand, a ceremony she detested, and foreigners were presented to her by the Ministers of their country as she passed slowly through the vast room until she reached the doors of her private apartments, at which stood, immense and immovable, knights of the Body Guard, whose sky-blue uniform covered with plates of solid silver, and whose silver casques surmounted by huge black plumes, gave them the appearance of ancient mailed warriors. Reaching the door her suite drew to either side, the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess

bowed profoundly, and she entered her rooms alone, to rest from the pomp which delighted and wearied her.

But the festivities she was bound to attend were not yet ended ; for even if she did not dine in public, no gala day was complete without a ball. This usually began at six o'clock and was opened by the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess dancing a minuet together, and afterwards with some of the nobles and their wives. Polish dances followed, and in turn were succeeded by English dances in which all who desired to do so took part. Even at the height of their utmost vivacity and abandonment, the figures in these dances suddenly stood still as if turned to stone by a magician's wand, when the doors of her Majesty's private apartments being flung open, showed her standing on the threshold, rouged, clad in cloth of gold and blazing with jewels, like some barbaric idol. Then, while all bowed to the ground, their Imperial Highnesses advanced and paid their respects, after which foreign ladies were presented to her, and the wives and daughters of Russian nobles vied with each other in striving to gain her notice and receive a word from her. Later she quietly sat down to cards with some of the Foreign Ministers or native princes, while dancing was resumed. Her favourite game was macao, though she never appeared intensely interested in her cards, but preferred to talk unceremoniously and with vivacity to those who formed

a half-circle round her chair. When ten o'clock came she quietly rose, and without wishing to attract any attention or disturb her guests, went to her own rooms. Afterwards a splendid supper was served, and all had dispersed before midnight sounded.

Two or three times during the winter season a masquerade ball was given, which was intended not only for the nobility but for persons of all ranks, about eight thousand tickets of invitation being issued for each of these festivities. On such occasions a magnificent suite of twenty apartments were opened, some of them being reserved for the nobility only; an immense salon known as the Hall of Apollo being allotted to those who had not been presented at Court; while in adjoining rooms refreshments were liberally served. Through all of these her Majesty made a point of passing several times each evening, that she might receive the homage and win the popularity of those on whom she smiled, and with whom she was pleased to exchange a few words. With a view to popularity she also frequently entertained at dinner the officers of the four regiments of guards. Now too stout to appear, as in former days, in the uniform of a colonel, she wore a riding habit made to imitate it as closely as possible. The custom at such times was, that on the officers she was to entertain being assembled, she entered the room where they awaited her and gave them her hand to kiss. Then one of

the lords in waiting brought her an immense bowl of wine which she ladled into glasses and handed to each. After this she passed at their head into an adjoining apartment where dinner was laid, when taking her place in the centre of the table, her guests ranged themselves according to their respective rank at either side of her. She then helped the soup, after which the dishes were served by servants. Healths were drunk, glasses were drained, and then at the appropriate moment the Czarina rose and left them to the enjoyment of their wine and their own company.

Always wearied with ceremonies, which she suffered because she believed them necessary to impress her people, and because they expected and were civilised by them, she found relief and enjoyment in the small select parties she continually gave at the Hermitage, to which none were invited but her oldest, most intimate friends. Here in the hope of placing all at their ease and being treated as an equal, she threw ceremony overboard, and insisted that others should do the same. Rules intended to carry out her wishes in this respect, were printed and hung in each room. One requested that all guests would sit down where and when they pleased, and that if seated when the Empress entered they were not to rise, and even to remain seated if she came and stood whilst speaking to them. Another rule declared that ill-temper and jealousy must be left behind by all who entered, that quarrels must

be forgotten and no lies must be spoken. Fines which were put into a box for the poor, were exacted from all who broke the rules. Sometimes the entertainments began with music, a harp or violin being played by professionals, but Catherine who had no ear for music, preferred cards, charades, or better still childish games. When these involved forfeits, she paid hers by doing whatever was asked of her, standing on a chair in a corner, sitting on the floor, or drinking a glass of water at a gulp. In return for the amusement given her by one of her set who could make his forehead disappear and his hair and eyebrows meet, she, while keeping a serious face, would wag her right ear, an unceasing diversion to those around her. At times her friend of former days, Leon Narichkine, who was now her Grand Equerry, and in reality her court buffoon, played all kinds of pranks to amuse her, giving imitations of the grunting of pigs, the barking of dogs, and the crowing of a cock, and making up verses which he sang, the theme of which dealt with the various amours of his wife and were greatly relished by his hearers.

The evening's entertainment closed with a supper. That her Majesty and her friends might be free from the bane of life—the presence of servants—the meal was served on small tables that raised and lowered by means of trap-doors. If what was desired was not found on them, they were by means of a spring sent down

with the name of the dish or the wine required written on a slip of paper, when if possible to procure, it appeared before them in return. As a rule the suppers were eaten, the laughter ceased, the guests were dispersed, and the lights were out before ten o'clock.

CHAPTER XII

The Imperial favourite is discarded—Concerning Gregory Patiomkin—His daring mimicry of his Sovereign—He becomes the reigning favourite—Dreadful and repulsive in appearance—Her Majesty is captivated by him—Great riches and high posts are given him—He virtually governs the empire—Catherine's pious pilgrimage to the Troitza Monastery in the company of her lover—He plays an impressive part—The Empress is equal to the occasion—She returns to the capital followed by Patiomkin—He is forbidden the Court but suddenly appears there—The new favourite—Arrival at St. Petersburg of the English Ambassador, James Harris, afterwards Earl of Malmesbury—His description of the Court—The favourite upbraids the Sovereign—Gregory Orloff remonstrates—Patiomkin schemes—Her Majesty is once more fascinated—Her description of her new favourite—Her interview with Alexis Orloff—The favourite falls—His interesting successor—Her Majesty writes of him to Grimm—A tragic figure is seen at Court—The end of Gregory Orloff—Her Majesty loses her lover—Her bitter grief and her pathetic letters.

THE reign of Vassiltshikof as Imperial favourite lasted about two-and-twenty months, at the end of which time, when his insipidity as a companion had become unendurable, he was appointed governor of a province near Moscow, promoted to the rank of Major-General, and given many valuable presents, irrespective of the roubles to the amount of one

GREGORY ALEXANDROWITZ PATIOMKIN,
Favourite of Catherine II.

million one hundred and ten thousand, with which, according to Castera, Catherine had already enriched him. Having as she wrote to Grimm, "dropped a certain excellent but very tiresome citizen," she soon replaced him by "one of the greatest, oddest, and most amusing originalities of this iron age." This was Gregory Patiomkin, who it will be remembered, had on the morning when Catherine was setting out at the head of her troops to capture her husband, ridden up to and presented her with the plume from his hat which was necessary to complete her military uniform.

The only son of a family originally Polish which had settled in Russia, and which though noble was extremely poor, he had received some education at the university of Moscow, where as a mere lad he gave himself up to dreams of splendid ambition, the fulfilment of which seemed impossible to one in his position. Borrowed means enabled him to reach the capital, where a relative procured him a sub-lieutenancy in the Simeonofsky Guards. Here he met with Gregory and Alexis Orloff, at a time when they were conspiring to place Catherine on the throne. As reckless and more ambitious than they, he joined in their schemes, and in the first flush of success presented himself to Catherine in the manner recalled. His next appearance before her was in a less heroic, less romantic character. Hearing from the Orloffs that he was a born mimic she sent for him to amuse her. It speaks

well for his boldness that the first imitation he gave, was of her Majesty, which was so clever and daring that it fulfilled its purpose by sending her into fits of laughter, and by securing her interest in himself. That he might have free entrance to the palace where his talent as a mimic was often in request, he was nominally made a chamberlain. Something in his character, those traits which in youth point to latent talents, must have indicated his possibilities to her, for she employed a tutor to teach him French, and gave him a post in the office of the Senate which afforded him an insight into the business of the State that was later on of invaluable service to him. As he still continued in the army he took part in the Russian war against Turkey, in which he showed such ability and courage that in April 1773 he was made a lieutenant-general.

On his return to St. Petersburg, proud of his achievements, more ambitious than ever, and ready to rival the Orloffs in her Majesty's favour, he met with a temporary check; for while playing a game of billiards one day with Alexis Orloff, some words he let fall regarding them and the Empress led to a quarrel, in which Patiomkin received a blow on one eye which lost him the sight of it for ever. The cause of the fight having reached Catherine's ears. Patiomkin received orders to leave the capital, when he went to his home at Smolensk, but not before he had managed to convey to her Majesty that he had

suffered for her sake. The seed of his words dropped into her mind, took root and flourished; for some twelve months later she wrote him a mere friendly letter which he, reading between the lines, answered by presenting himself before her. Three days later the amiable Vassiltshikof was on his way to Moscow, and Patiomkin reigned in his stead.

The man with whom the Sovereign of All the Russias was now desperately infatuated, was of giant stature and as is stated "dreadful and repulsive in appearance." One of his eyes gone, the other squinted, while his thin body wriggled as he walked and his knees knocked together. Disdainful of appearances save on great occasions, he seldom took the trouble to wash himself, or comb his matted black hair, and when in thought bit his nails and scratched his head. For all that something magnetic in him to which her nature responded, captivated her, or as the French envoy expressed it, "made her crazy over him," whom in her correspondence she referred to as her soul, her life, her inestimable treasure. On his part Patiomkin was genuinely in love with her, and had been he declared since the rosy morning when he had seen her set out for Peterhoff. A poem which he had written long before he became the favourite ran as follows: "As soon as I beheld thee I thought of thee alone; thy lovely eyes captivated me, yet I trembled to say I loved. But, O Heavens, what torment to love one

to whom I dare not declare it, one who can never be mine. Cruel gods, why have you given her such charms, or why did you exalt her so high? Why did you destine me to love her and her alone, her whose sacred name will never pass my lips, whose charming image will never quit my heart?"

Wealth and honour were showered on him by his beloved, who made him her General aide-de-camp, and gave him a hundred thousand roubles (about twenty thousand pounds), a mere trifle to what was to follow. At the same time the marshal of the Court was ordered to provide him with a table of twenty-four covers daily and to defray all the expenses of his household. In return for this he was given to understand that he was not to hold familiar conversation with other women, and that if he dined outside the palace with his friends, the mistress of the house must not be present. Such privileges and riches as were given him were far from satisfying the ambitious and dominating spirit of Patiomkin, and one of his earliest requests was that he might be admitted to the council which advised on the affairs of the empire, the members of which were unwilling to grant it even at her Majesty's desire. He was, however, determined "to bring things about," as he told the French Envoy, who says, "He was resolved to renew his demands. Evidently they were refused, for on Sunday when I was sitting at a table near him

and the Empress, I saw that he not only did not speak to her, but that he did not even reply to her questions. She was beside herself, and we for our part very much out of countenance. The silence was only broken by the monosyllables of the Grand Equerry who never succeeded in animating the conversation. On rising from the table the Empress retired alone, and reappeared with red eyes and a troubled air. On Monday she was in better spirits, and he entered the council that very day."

Circumstances favouring him, his dominating influences soon made itself felt, so that in a comparatively short time he became virtually the Ruler of All the Russias. The chief facts that led him to this dazzling height were that the Great Chancellor, Count Woronzoff, who was now old, feeble, and near his death, had for some years been unable to fulfil the duties of his office; that Count Ostermann, the Vice-Chancellor, was weak and yielding; and that Count Panin, who held the post of Foreign Minister, had become indolent, devoted to gambling and voluptuousness, and so indifferent to the business of the State, that he condescended to see the Empress but once a week, made it almost impossible for the foreign Ministers to consult him, and carried in his pockets for days at a time important documents without answering or sometimes opening them. There was, however, one man of mettle in the council, whom

Patiomkin had to face, Count Zakhar Tshernishof, the President of the War Office, whom however the audacious favourite soon ousted from his post that he might seize it. As for Gregory Orloff who, jealous of and angry with him, at first declared he would never allow him to wear the uniform of the artillery of which he, Orloff, was grand master, he like the rest was compelled to submit to the superior force of this masterful spirit. A story is told of the two men meeting one day on the grand staircase of the Winter Palace, Patiomkin ascending, Orloff descending. "Well," asked the former, "what do they say at Court?" To which Orloff replied, "Oh, nothing, but that you are going up and I am going down."

So disappointed was Gregory Orloff with the exclusion of himself from favour and power, that he now asked for that which had been offered to and refused by him before, permission to travel abroad. As, however, the Empress was unwilling to lose sight of him at a time when his discontent might breed revolt, she persuaded him to abandon his idea of leaving the Court. As Patiomkin himself was fond of declaring, his star was in the ascendant. He became the dispenser of all favours, the source of all honours to the courtiers who thronged and waited for hours in his ante-rooms and who secretly referred to him as "Cyclops" and "the blind beggar." Scarce a day

passed that some new office was not seized on by him, that he did not gain some new dignity, some access of revenue, some Imperial present. To the Grand Duke he was barely civil; veteran commanders were treated by him with insolence; ministers or generals were dismissed or appointed according to his caprice; and lying on his bed, clad only in a shirt and dressing-gown, bare-legged, unwashed, unkempt, he listened to the representatives of the great Powers, whom he graciously admitted to his ill-ventilated bedroom.

Among other honours conferred on him by Catherine in 1775 was that of Count, while Frederick of Prussia, anxious to gain the good will of this savage, sent him the Order of the Black Eagle, and for the same reason Joseph II. of Austria made him a Prince of the Holy Roman Empire. Surfeited by power and dazzled by his position, it was no wonder that he now aspired to become in reality what he was in name, Emperor of Russia. In feeling his way up the steps of the throne he showed a craftiness unusual in one of his bold spirit. The circumstances and surroundings of his attempt to gain this supreme height were selected with dramatic insight.

Though Catherine cannot have had the slightest sense of religion, she was ever mindful that her subjects required her to be an ardent believer. To prove that she was, she set out in March 1776 on a pious pilgrimage to the monastery of Troitza, declaring it to

be her intention to walk the forty versts which separated it from Moscow. Leaving St. Petersburg she took with her the Grand Duke, as a precaution to her safety, Patiomkin, the chief members of the State and of the Household, four regiments of the Guards, and an immense number of ikons to distribute on her way, besides a large picture inlaid with gold and precious stones which she intended to present to the Cathedral of Moscow, and that occupied an open carriage which immediately followed her own during her journey. Passing under triumphal arches and through decorated streets, she was received in Moscow with the enthusiasm which so devout a sovereign deserved. Having remained there a week she set out on foot for the monastery of Troitza, still accompanied by her son and her lover. It was here it will be remembered that her mother had a stormy scene with the Empress Elizabeth and that she herself while seated with Peter on a window sill had been told to pack up and make ready to return to Germany; and it was here more than twenty years later that another scene was to be enacted, which must have taken an equally vivid place in her memory in years to come.

No sooner had she and her suite been lodged in the monastery, than Patiomkin, who in the beginning of his career had thought of becoming a monk, showed signs of a profound devotion that not only equalled but exceeded her own. All food was refused by him

except roots and vegetables, and his only drink was water. Casting aside his brilliant uniforms and his comfortable dressing-gown, he decently covered his bare legs with the habit of a monk. So sincere was his penitence that he strove to rival the monks in the exercise of their devotions, rising before daybreak to chant the psalms, attending many Masses, and letting the sun go down upon his singing of vespers. When these penitential practices had accustomed the Empress's mind to his change of heart, she was waited on by his confessor, who on behalf of the repentant sinner, explained that being awakened to grace, Count Patiomkin could never again resume his former relations with her Majesty, unless indeed they were made lawful by the blessing of the Church. Catherine listened to the holy man with earnest attention and seemed much impressed by his words ; but hesitating to give him an answer, she requested that it might be received by the penitent himself. Led to believe from experience that his sway was supreme over her, and blinded by his egotism to her power of insight, Patiomkin believed that there was but one reply possible to her.

His tall gaunt figure worn from fasts, bent with remorse, and clad in the garb of a monk, his air sombre, the unholy wistfulness of his remaining eye subdued by sanctity, he entered the room where she awaited him. They who had sinned stood face to

face, only one of them fathoming the soul of the other. Then he spoke to her of the wonders of grace, of his sincere repentance of the past, of the tenderness of a conscience that bade him deny the cravings of his heart, and urged him to follow his true vocation and seek peace and happiness in the cloister. Calm in manner, sorrowful, not without tenderness as if mindful of her love, she listened to him. When he ceased, her answer startled. Greater as an actress than he was as an actor, she braced herself to assure him that no man should turn deaf ears to the cry of conscience ; that as it had bidden him leave his old life, she would not do him the irreparable wrong of coming between him and the grace so miraculously, so suddenly vouchsafed to him. He had therefore better remain in this peaceful monastery, far from the machinations, troubles, and deceptions of Courts, where he could seek, and by God's will obtain, the salvation of his immortal soul.

At that she bowed and passed sadly and with impressive dignity out of the room, leaving him in a mood that may be better imagined than described. On the day following she left for Moscow and a few days later was hurrying to St. Petersburg. For shame's sake Patiomkin could not immediately throw off the mask, and it was only some three weeks later that he reached the capital. There he met with a surprise and disappointment greater than what he

had experienced at the monastery of Troitza ; for on entering the Winter Palace, he before the glance of whose single eye guards had quailed and courtiers had bowed to the earth, was sternly denied admission to her Majesty's presence, and was not permitted to reach his own apartments which he was told were in the possession of the Empress's new favourite, Zavadovski. His storm of rage, his threats of vengeance on the captain of the guard, who backed by force prevented his headlong rush up the great stairway, had no effect, and stamping, fuming, and swearing, he left the palace, where but a few weeks previously he had been virtually lord and master.

Zavadovski, the man who now gained favour with Catherine, had first been introduced to Court as a prompter in its theatre. To a handsome exterior he added some ability as an accountant, which had led Field-Marshal Rumiantsof to make him his secretary. Struck by the accuracy and conciseness of the reports drawn up by him and submitted to her, Catherine asked the Field-Marshal to send him some of his secretaries, and of the two forwarded to her he was one. In this way he had come under her Majesty's notice. On his being promoted to the post of favourite she had presented him with the sum which she habitually gave to each new lover, twenty thousand pounds. Fearful lest he might be molested or she upbraided by the stormy Patiomkin, a message was

formally sent to the latter stating it was her pleasure that he should travel abroad. This he received with an air of melancholy resignation, and promised to obey without delay. But though he might not retain his place as favourite, he was unwilling to forfeit his high position as ruler of the empire, to retain which he believed he had only to meet his Imperial mistress face to face. Her fear of his anger being lulled by his apparent submission to her wishes, no special orders regarding him had been given to the palace guards, so that when he appeared there next evening dressed as for a drawing-room, he was allowed not only to pass the outer entrance, but the portals of her Majesty's apartments where she was playing whist. On his striding into the room, tall and menacing of aspect, the courtiers who in general had rejoiced at his fall and who believed him to be on his way to Moscow, stared in amazement and held their breaths in preparation of some dramatic action. Surprised by the sudden hush that had involuntarily fallen on all, the Empress looked up to see him advance towards her. Always supreme mistress of her emotions she neither moved nor spoke but watched him draw nearer yet and calmly seat himself at her table. Then their eyes met in a steady stare until the lids of hers dropped, and she sighed as if in relief at an ended struggle. At that he, still silent, stretched forward one hand and cut the cards, showing her that which he had turned up.

"You were always lucky," she remarked, and began to deal; and no word was said then or later of his departure. The result was that this man, whom she knew was invaluable to the government of the empire, not only retained his power, but if possible increased it, though he was never again her Majesty's favourite.

Gregory Orloff, who had not accompanied the Czarina to Moscow, had been staying at his castle of Gatshina when news reached him of his rival's downfall. Delighted at this and confident of being able to win back his former position, he hastened quick as horses could carry him to St. Petersburg, where he found Zavadovski installed as favourite, and Patiomkin exercising his former power, arbitrary, surrounded by obsequious courtiers, and scornful. At that Orloff saw that his own influence, once almost as great as Patiomkin's, had passed away for ever, and having had an interview with Catherine he quietly took his leave of her and retired to his country place. The sequel of his farewell soon caused surprise and displeasure to her Majesty, for meeting a connection of his own, Mademoiselle Zinovief, a charming girl not then nineteen, he fell genuinely, passionately in love with her. Although in his forty-third year he was still superbly handsome in the eyes of this young girl, who returned his love with an ardour equal to his own, when for the first time in his life he

realised the happiness of pure affection. Knowing that it would be useless to ask the consent of the Empress to his union, as was obligatory on all her nobles, he married Mademoiselle Zinovief without Catherine's knowledge and was ideally happy until the day when by command of her outraged Majesty, bride and bridegroom were torn apart, while the Senate was asked to dissolve a marriage which was not only illegal, as having taken place between cousins no matter how distant, but which had been contracted without the Empress's approval. Despite Gregory Orloff's appeals, despite the heartbroken cries of his wife, the Senate annulled the marriage at the request of the Czarina, who had no sooner taken vengeance on her former lover, than she repented, and in her turn annulled the decree of the Senate, so that the husband and wife were once more united. Nay, to atone for the pain caused to the bride, Catherine presented her with a toilet table of solid gold, and gave her permission to spend her honeymoon out of Russia, where her happiness could not be witnessed by the eyes of her sovereign.

Having considerable business abilities and believing himself capable of holding high offices in the State, the new favourite undertook to oust Patiomkin from his posts, that he himself might fill them. The first step to be taken in this direction was to prejudice her Majesty against the man who had often hectored her, and had always succeeded in having his own will carried out.

In this Zavadovski was joined by a number of courtiers, some ministers, and many artful women, all of whom had cause to detest the first man in the empire. On the conspiracy against him coming to his knowledge, Patiomkin took the simplest, most effectual way of suppressing it. Knowing by sight a young Servian named Zovitch, remarkable for his handsome presence, who was a lieutenant in the hussars, Patiomkin by a stroke of his pen made him a captain, in which capacity he placed him on duty at the palace. The difficulty of directing Catherine's attention to him was not great, while that of fixing it on him was less, and as his manner and appearance pleased her, he was selected as the new favourite. The downfall of the man who had last held that position was softened by the presents made him with Imperial generosity; for in addition to the one million three hundred and eighty thousand roubles bestowed on him during his reign of eighteen months, he was given on his departure jewels, plate, ten thousand serfs, and a considerable estate to which he retired.

His successor, Zovitch, received at once not only the customary twenty thousand pounds, but an estate valued at an equal sum, and was raised to the rank of major-general. Without education or intelligence, he was a man of simple manners, kind-hearted, and without presumption. Though knowing the instability of her Majesty's affections, he yet resolved to hold his

place in them as long as possible, and to tolerate no rivals. "Je sais bien que je dois sauter, mais par Dieu je couperai les oreilles à celui qui prend ma place," this excellent man used to say.

His appointment to the post of favourite, in the winter of 1777, was quickly followed by the arrival at St. Petersburg of an English Minister whose letters and dispatches give many interesting and amusing particulars of the Court. This was James Harris, afterwards first Lord Malmesbury, the descendant of an ancient Wiltshire family, whose father was a Member of Parliament, an author, and a lover of music, and who among other distinctions had that of being a friend of Handel, who had left him his portrait and the manuscripts of all his operas. A man of singularly handsome presence and dignified bearing, with keen insight, intelligence, and tact, a charm of manner and the gift of persuasion, the qualities of the future Lord Malmesbury were early recognised; for after three years' service as Secretary of the Embassy at Madrid, he was at the age of twenty-four appointed British Minister at the Court of Berlin. Resigning this in 1776, he was appointed Minister to the Court of St. Petersburg, and arrived at the Russian capital early in January 1778; the chief object of his mission being to learn the sentiments of the Court on the situation of Europe, and to discover if there was any practicable disposition

on the part of the Empress to form an offensive and defensive alliance with Great Britain.

In due time he was presented to the Czarina who smiled upon him with gracious insincerity, and received from him with apparent pleasure expressions of the friendship entertained for her by his Majesty George III. In writing home concerning his interview, he stated that the Empress possessed in the most wonderful manner the ability of putting those she talked to at their ease, while preserving her dignity. As to her Court, though he was prepared for its magnificence and parade, yet it exceeded everything he had imagined. A little experience enabled him to have clearer views and to express stronger language concerning it. "The interior of the Court is one continued scene of intrigue, debauchery, iniquity, and corruption," he says; "great luxury and little morality seem to run through every rank. Flattery and servility characterise the inferior class, presumption and pride the higher one. A slight though brilliant varnish covers in both the most illiterate and uninformed minds. Their entertainments, their apartments, and the number of their domestics are quite Asiatic; and what is odd, though perhaps very natural, although they imitate the foreigners in everything, and have neither customs nor character of their own, yet, generally speaking a stranger is ill received when he comes among them."

So far as the business of diplomacy went he found that Count Panin had most influence with the Czarina in foreign affairs, but it was wellnigh impossible to induce him to listen to proposals or advances, as he seldom gave more than half an hour out of the twenty-four to the duties of his office. Worse still, he was found to be beyond the reach of corruption, because he received from Frederick of Prussia a wage higher than others were prepared to pay him ; while as to the lesser statesmen and panderers, who had free access to the Empress and could bias her mind, they were "averse to public business and serious reflections, and were so munificently provided for by their Imperial mistress that it is impossible ever to catch their attention by any pecuniary emoluments however considerable," as James Harris regretfully states. The watchfulness and struggle maintained by the British Minister against the hostility shown to England by the King of Prussia, were at the beginning of 1779, increased by the projected treaty of The Armed Neutrality against England. Seeing that although Count Panin continued to receive him with "the strongest appearance of cordiality and regard," he at the same time took every opportunity to stab him in the dark, James Harris made overtures to Patiomkin, who hated Panin and disliked Frederick, notwithstanding that his Majesty had sought to buy his friendship by

the offer of a German Princess for a wife. Patiomkin received him favourably and eventually succeeded in obtaining for him several private interviews with her Imperial Majesty. The zeal and diligence with which the British Minister served his country, were rewarded by George III., who conferred on him the Order of the Bath. Its insignia, with instructions regarding its investiture, having been forwarded to Russia, the Empress undertook to perform the ceremony at a great drawing-room held on March 20th, 1779, when as a mark of her favour she presented him with the diamond-hilted sword with which she had knighted him.

While political schemes of the utmost importance to Europe were hanging on the action and decision of the Czarina, her Court was occupied with the prospect of the rise or fall of the last favourite. From the first it was plain to all that Zovitch, ignorant of the ways of Courts and without intellect, could not hold his high position long, and speculation as to the man who should replace him became rife. As Patiomkin desired that the new favourite should owe his elevation to him and therefore work for his interests, he took the opportunity one evening as the Empress was about to set out for the theatre to introduce to her an officer in the hussars, one of his adjutants named Korsac. The Czarina seeing the object for which he was presented, smiled on him

graciously and entered into conversation with him ; but no sooner had she gone her way than Zovitch, who remained behind blazing with anger, fell on Patiomkin, called him by the most abusive names he could use, and insisted on fighting him. This satisfaction was refused Zovitch, who on Catherine's return followed her to her apartment, told her what had happened, and assured her that all the honours and riches she had heaped on him were as nothing in comparison with her favour. Always ready to receive flattery she heard him with pleasure, and on Patiomkin next presenting himself, he was coldly received by her. A day or two later, however, she ordered Zovitch to invite Patiomkin to supper, *de raccommoder l'affaire pusiqu'elle n'aimait pas les tracasseries.* At this meal they apparently made friends, "but Patiomkin who is an artful man will in the end get the better of Zovitch's bluntness and singularity. Patiomkin is determined to have him dismissed, and Zovitch is determined to cut the throat of his successor. Judge of the tenor of the whole Court from this anecdote," says Sir James Harris who relates it.

Though Zovitch imagined himself more secure than before in her Majesty's favour, she undeceived him on that point only a few days later than the date of the supper, by dismissing him though in the gentlest terms possible. These were contrasted by the tempest of passion into which he burst. "Forget-

ting to whom he was speaking" writes the English Minister to Lord Suffolk, "he was very bitter in his reproaches; painted this mutable conduct in the strongest colours, and foretold the most fatal consequences from it. I am assured this language was felt, but made no alterations in the plan laid down. Zovitch, with an increase of pension, an immense sum of ready money, and an addition of seven thousand peasants to his estates is going to travel. His successor, by name Korsac, will not be declared till this journey takes place; the impetuosity of Zovitch's character making it not safe for any man to take publicly this office upon him while he remains in the country. Both Court and town are occupied with this event alone, and I am sorry to say it gives rise to many unpleasant reflections, and sinks in the eyes of foreigners the reputation of the Empress, and the consideration of the empire."

It was not alone in the eyes of foreigners that her reputation suffered, and strange to say one of her subjects who most keenly felt her degradation and remonstrated with her, was a man who himself had been the cause of scandal to her. This was Gregory Orloff now happily married, reformed, and settled down in St. Petersburg in the Shtegelman Palace, given him by the Empress. The effect of his words upon her was that she resolved not to add to the list of her lovers, but to recall one of them, Zavadovski, now

living in retirement on the estate she had given him. It may be that this decision was influenced by the fact that Zovitch, whom she had ordered to travel and had munificently rewarded, yet remained in the capital, venting his dissatisfaction, threatening, and speaking boldly of his Imperial mistress. Accordingly Zavadovski was sent for, much to the annoyance of Patiomkin, who had taken some trouble to get rid of him but a year before. He therefore invited her Majesty to one of his country seats, where it was suggested she might for a while forget her worries. On accepting the invitation she found another guest already there, Korsac, who was soon after publicly appointed as the new favourite.

This man who had originally been a sergeant in the Guards, was immediately raised to the rank of aide-de-camp-general to her Majesty, while by the addition of a few letters his name was changed to Korsakoff, which had a more aristocratic sound and appearance. Meantime Zavadovski arrived in St. Petersburg, ready to be reinstated in his former post, which he found already filled. As he had refused to leave the country until strongly urged by letters from Gregory Orloff, he called on him to demand why he had been disturbed in his retirement. Explanations followed, and eventually he was rewarded for coming to the capital by a place in the Senate. Zovitch by this time had set out for France, and having travelled through other

countries eventually settled down on one of his estates in White Russia.

Though Korsakoff was quite as ignorant as his immediate predecessor, he was infinitely more vain and conceited. Tall and well made, he seemed the perfection, of manhood to Catherine, who named him Pyrrhus, King of Epirus, and who in writing of him to Grimm, who had told her that she was infatuated, says, "Infatuated? Do you not know that this term is out of place in speaking of Pyrrhus King of Epirus, a peril to painters, a despair to sculptors? It is the admiration, sir, it is the enthusiasm that the masterpieces of nature inspire. Things of beauty fall and are dashed to pieces like idols before the ark of the Lord, before the character of this mighty man. Never does Pyrrhus make a movement which is not either noble or graceful. He is radiant as the sun, he radiates light. It is all in harmony, nothing is out of place; it is the effect of a mingling of the priceless gifts of nature; art is not absent, but artifice is a thousand leagues away."

The ravings of this woman now in her fiftieth year, for a man her junior by a quarter of a century, found expression while he had the charm of novelty. Raised to the post of favourite in May 1778, he held it but three months, when his fall began to be anticipated by the courtiers, and competitors for his place flung themselves boldly in her Majesty's way in the hope

of founding, not only their own fortunes, but those of their families. Some of these were supported by Patiomkin, others by Gregory Orloff, and others still by Count Panin, all sense of decency having now vanished from her Majesty's Court. Claiming it as part of his office to appoint a new favourite as he would a secretary or courtier, Patiomkin flew into a violent rage and absented himself from Court for three days, when her Majesty refused his candidate and expressed an intention to make her own selection. At the end of that time he hurried back, on hearing that she had watched with some interest, a young man named Strackoff as he danced at a ball at Peterhoff. The elevation of this individual who held the post of secretary to Count Panin, and was not therefore likely to use his influence in Patiomkin's favour, was strongly opposed by him. He dared even to threaten and to use violent language to the Empress regarding her supposed choice until, according to Sir James Harris, "finding no effect from this behaviour, but that she determined to abide by her plan, he changed his tone to the most submissive possible; he begged and obtained pardon, and offered his services towards bringing it to bear in the most decorous and expeditious manner."

This complacency restored Patiomkin to favour at a moment when to the surprise of the court and the consternation of the candidates for the post of

favourite, Alexis Orloff arrived from Cronstadt at the capital. Bluff and free spoken, violent in his temper and ever ready for desperate deeds, this man who had brought Catherine to St. Petersburg on the morning of the revolution, and who had strangled her husband, always held a strong influence over his Sovereign that had some foundation in fear. This influence had recently been increased by his exploits in the navy during the war between Russia and Turkey, which she had commemorated by erecting a marble column at Tsarskoe Selo to his honour, and by having a gold medal struck which represented him as Mars. Both he and his brother Gregory detested Patiomkin who, at this unexpected visit of Alexis, assumed an air of indifference and joviality he was far from feeling. "I had the honour of playing at the Empress's table, where both these gentlemen assisted," writes Sir James Harris, "and it is beyond the powers of my pen to describe a scene in which every passion that can affect the human mind bore a part, and which were by all actors concealed by the most masterly hypocrisy."

The loss of power and favour sustained by his brother Gregory, the submission of all including the Sovereign to Patiomkin, the increased disorder of the Court which had been recently added to by the incident of a youth named Swickosky in his disappointment at not gaining—or in the hope of obtaining—the post

of favourite, dramatically but not fatally stabbing himself, roused Alexis's ire. Therefore, on her Majesty admitting him to a private interview and asking him to increase the many obligations she already owed him, and to add to her personal happiness by making friends with Patiomkin and advising him to be more circumspect in his conduct, more attentive to the duties of the great offices he filled, less ready to make enemies, and in return for the favours she heaped on him not to make her life a continued scene of misery, Alexis answered her in words for whose authenticity Sir James Harris vouches ; " You know, madam, I am your slave, my life is at your service. If Patiomkin disturbs your peace of mind, give me your orders and he shall disappear immediately, you shall hear no more of him ; but with my character and reputation to engage in a Court intrigue, to seek the good will of a person I must despise as a man and regard as the greatest enemy of the State, your Majesty must pardon me if I decline the task."

At that she burst into tears while Alexis Orloff continued by saying that Patiomkin had no real attachment for her ; that he merely consulted his own interests in all he did ; that his only superior talent was cunning ; that he was gradually lulling her into a state of voluptuous security in order that he might gain the sovereign power ; and that he had sunk her reputation in the eyes of the world, and

alienated from her the affections of her faithful subjects. Finally he who had the gift of expressing himself with clearness and concision, added, "If you choose to get rid of so dangerous a man my life is at your devotion; but if you mean to temporise with him, I can be of no use to you in the execution of measures where flattery, dissimulation, and duplicity are the most necessary qualifications." The Empress then dried her tears, thanked him for his zealous offers, declared she could not allow harsh measures to be taken with Patiomkin, complained that her health was affected by the scenes he was continually enacting, and ended the interview, the whole subject of which she repeated at the first opportunity to Patiomkin, who had no difficulty in persuading her that it was due to personal spite and jealousy. At that Gregory and Alexis Orloff, angry and indignant, absented themselves from Court, spoke very freely and scathingly of her Majesty, and eventually quitted the capital, Alexis to settle in Moscow, while Gregory and his wife, now in a delicate state of health, obtained permission to travel.

Notwithstanding the many rumours of the downfall of Korsakoff and the various candidates ready to take his place, he continued as favourite for sixteen months. His love for music can scarcely have recommended him to one who had no ear for harmony, but to please him she invited to Russia distinguished Italian

musicians, who sang trios and duets with him, while Nadine, the famous violinist, was engaged at an enormous salary to accompany him. "I have never seen any one who more really delighted in all the sounds of harmony than Pyrrhus, King of Epirus," the Empress writes to Grimm. It is probable he might have continued to hold his post, had he been less vain and more discreet. As a lady of the bed-chamber to the Empress, and her special confidant, the Countess Bruce, whose husband was a descendant of a Scotchman brought to Russia by Peter the Great, had many opportunities of being in the company of Korsakoff for whom she secretly showed some predilection. On his part the favourite responded to it. Though both took pains to hide their feelings from Catherine, they were quickly perceived by Patiomkin's solitary eye. This, swiftly grasping the situation, saw that by encouraging them, he could at a single blow destroy the woman he hated because of her influence with the Empress, and remove the reigning favourite whose fidelity to himself he had reason to suspect. He therefore smiled on their flirtation, gave them such opportunities to indulge it as their close attendance on the Czarina permitted, acted as their confidant, lulled them into belief in his sympathies, and then one day when talking with her Majesty, suddenly opened a door which enabled her to see the Countess Bruce in the arms of Korsakoff.

The door then closed as swiftly as it had opened, leaving Patiomkin astonished, the Empress shocked ; for by one of those strange contradictions so frequently found in human nature, she was ever sternly opposed to public impropriety, and had but a little while before this occurrence caused Sir George Macartney, then English Minister, to be recalled, because he had been found carrying on an intrigue with one of her maids-of-honour ; while on the French Envoy attempting to tell her a *risque* story, she had stared at him with grave displeasure and interrupted him by asking a question irrelevant to his subject. Silently and sorrowfully her Majesty rang a bell, a page appeared, and a chamberlain was summoned to whom she gave instructions to see that those whose inexcusable indecorum had offended should quit the palace without attempting to see her. The Countess Bruce was ordered to Moscow, Korsakoff to travel outside the kingdom. At the same time he was to be assured that his future would be provided for. During his reign of sixteen months he had received about one hundred and ninety thousand roubles, while on his dismissal he was given one hundred thousand roubles to pay his debts, as much more to pay his travelling expenses, two thousand roubles to furnish a house, and four thousand Polish peasants.

His dramatic downfall caused a sensation at Court, though it was soon eclipsed by the excitement consequent on the election of a new favourite. This

time her Majesty's choice fell on Lanskoi, then two and twenty, the descendant of a distinguished Polish family, who was one of the sixty tall and handsome men whose duty as Chevalier Guards it was to guard the doors of the Sovereign's apartments. Young and graceful, he was educated and accomplished, a lover of art, gentle in manner, fond of literature, beneficent and universally popular. His selection, however, was strongly opposed by Patiomkin, not from any objection to him, but because he had another candidate in view, and it was only on receiving some nine hundred thousand roubles in land and money, that her Majesty gained his approval of her choice.

So poor was Lanskoi at the time of his election to the post of favourite, in October 1779, that his whole property consisted of five shirts, while his debts had reached the sum of thirty thousand roubles. These were immediately paid, the usual presents were made him, together with diamonds that cost eighty thousand roubles, and his sister and his cousin were appointed maids-of-honour. Unfortunately for him his constitution was always delicate. He had not been in his post four months when Sir James Harris calling one morning to discuss political affairs with Patiomkin, was told by him : " You have chosen an unlucky moment. The new favourite lies dangerously ill ; and the cause of his illness and uncertainty of his recovery have so entirely unhinged the Empress,

that she is incapable of employing her thoughts on any subject, and all ideas of ambition, of glory, of dignity, are absorbed in this one passion."

Lanskoi, now promoted to be a general, recovered and became the inseparable companion, the delight of her Majesty's life. They read together, she employed Chevalier de Serres to teach him French, and helped him in his lessons, she wrote to Grimm at his dictation, playfully styling herself his secretary, "who is as you know, a very good and clever personage, whom I am glad to praise in passing, who gives me the use of his pen without charge, and sometimes more than I want of his advice." Desiring to surround himself with beautiful things he instructed Grimm to buy for him the picture gallery of the Comte de Baudoin then for sale, for which he enclosed fifty thousand roubles, with a statement that if more were required it would be sent, "as soon as the news reaches your most humble servant or his secretary." Catherine in writing of him to Grimm says that "he began by gobbling up the poets and poems one winter, several historians the next. Novels bore me, and we trifle with Algarotti and his like. Without having studied we have numberless acquirements, and we live with delight in the company of all that is best and most learned. Besides that we build and we plant, we are benevolent, gay, honest, and as amiable as can be."

In 1782 their society was frequently shared by a pathetic and tragic figure, that of Gregory Orloff, no longer superlatively handsome and headstrong, but haggard, broken, and insane. Having taken the wife he adored to France for her health, it was soon discovered that her lungs were affected, and that she suffered from consumption. The leading doctors in Europe were consulted in the hope of saving a life beside which honours and wealth were as dross ; and climates warm and cold were sought in an endeavour to stay the disease. It was all in vain, for she died in June 1782, at Lausanne. So great was her husband's affliction that his mind gave way, and he was led back to Russia by his brother Alexis. At sight of him whom she had once passionately loved, who had been mainly instrumental in placing her on the throne, whose tempers she had been accustomed to treat as those of a child, to whose hectoring she had patiently submitted, her Majesty's grief was profound. Her conduct to him, according to Sir James Harris, was kindness carried even to weakness, for "she absolutely forbids any harsh methods to be employed, rejects all ideas of confinement or discipline, and hoping against all precedent to restore him by gentleness and indulgence, she suffers him not only to visit and be visited, but admits him at all hours and in all dresses, whether she is alone, in company, or engaged in the most important concerns, to her

presence. His situation of mind when he is there, his wild and incoherent discourse ever affect her to tears, and discompose her so entirely that for the remainder of the day she can enjoy neither pleasure nor business. She is sometimes exposed to hear the most unwelcome of all language, and a few nights ago he exclaimed of a sudden that remorse and compunction of conscience had deprived him of his senses, and that the share he had in a transaction long since past, had brought down on him the judgment of heaven. You may easily guess to what a cruel recollection such expressions in his mouth must give rise, and how intimately connected the tranquillity of her conscience must be with that of his."

His presence, wandering about the apartments of the palace once so familiar to him, was resented by several of the courtiers, Patiomkin and Lanskoi in particular, who urged that he should be removed from the capital, either to Moscow or to one of his country houses, both being jealous of the concern shown by the Empress for this unhappy soul, while Patiomkin feared lest Orloff, in his rare moments of lucidity, might speak certain truths not agreeable to his old enemy. They had not to suffer him for long, for he died in April 1783, insane to the last, and believing he was haunted by the spectre of a strangled man before whom he fled in terror. Catherine, in writing to Grimm of this occurrence, says: "Though quite

prepared for this mournful event, I confess that it causes me the profoundest grief. They say to me, and I say to myself, what is always said on such occasions; paroxysms of sobbing are my only response and I suffer terribly."

Suffering immeasurably more poignant lay before her. Some eighteen months later the man whom she had for four years worshipped above all his predecessors fell ill. Doctors came and went, gravely prescribed for the patient, and left him more ailing than before. Then a famous German physician named Weikard, who had a hunch back and a domineering manner was summoned, who authoritatively stated that Lanskoi had a bad fever adding, with the brusqueness of his race, that he must die. His sentence fell like a blow on the Empress's heart, and then rebounded, for she could not believe that Heaven would send her such an unbearable affliction. Warned by Weikard not to enter Lanskoi's room lest she might take the fever, she gloried in risking her life for him, and sat on his bed her arm supporting his shoulders while she forced the prescribed medicines on him. A soreness in her throat did not hinder her from nursing him, though this was the chief symptom of the patient's illness, which in reality was quinsy, though the famous doctor's mistake was discovered too late to rescue the victim of his ignorance; for Lanskoi vainly gasping for breath, died in the clinging

arms of the woman who loved him, on June 19th, 1784, in the twenty-sixth year of his age.

Her grief at his loss was only equalled by her rage against the doctor. Shutting herself up in her rooms, she cried by day and night, accused Heaven of cursing her, declared she would resign and that she would never again have another favourite. In announcing his death to Grimm, her words came direct from the heart. "When I began this letter," she wrote, "I was in hope and joy, and my thoughts came so swiftly that I knew not what became of them. It is so no more; I am plunged into the depths of sorrow and my happiness has fled. I thought I should have died of the irreparable loss that I have just had, a week ago, of my best friend. I had hoped that he would be the support of my old age; he was attentive, he learnt much, he had acquired all my tastes. He was a young man whom I was bringing up, who was grateful, kind and good, who shared my sorrows when I had them, and rejoiced in my joys. In a word I have the misfortune to have to tell you with tears that General Lanskoi is no more, and my room so pleasant before, has become an empty den in which I can just drag myself about like a shadow. Something went wrong with my throat the day before his death, and I have a raging fever, nevertheless since yesterday I have got up from bed, but am so feeble and sorrowful that at the present hour I cannot look

upon a human face without my voice being choked with tears. I cannot sleep or eat, reading wearies me, and writing is too much for me. I know not what will become of me, but I know that never in my life have I been so unhappy as since my kind, my best friend quitted me. I have opened my drawer, I have found this sheet that I have begun, I have written these lines, but I can write no more."

Days, weeks, and months passed without bringing her relief, and the only thing that seemed to interest her was the erection in the gardens of Tsarskoe Selo, of a magnificent mausoleum designed by an English artist, Charles Cameron. The fortune of seven million roubles, or about a million and a half English money, which Lanskoi had accumulated, were bequeathed to his benefactress, who generously gave it to his sisters.

In her next communication to her confidant Grimm, she tells him she was incapable of writing to him for two months, because she knew it would make them both suffer. "A week after I had written to you my letter of July," she says, "Count Fedor Orloff and Prince Patiomkin came to me. Up to then I could not endure to see any one. Those two took me just in the right way; they began to howl with me, and then I felt at my ease with them; but it took a long time to come to it, and thanks to my sensibility, I had become insensible to everything but this one sorrow, and this seemed to increase and take fresh

GENERAL LANSKOI.

A medal struck in commemoration of one of Catherine's Favourites.

hold at every step, at every word. Do not think, however, that despite the horror of the situation I neglected the least thing which required my attention. In the most awful moments I was called upon to give orders, and I gave them in an orderly and sane manner which particularly struck General Soltykof. More than two months passed without any respite; at last some calmer hours have come, and now calmer days. The weather having become wet, the rooms at Tsarskoe Selo have had to be heated. Mine have been heated with such violence that on the evening of September 5th, not knowing where to go, I called out my coach and came straight here without any one knowing it. I have put up at the Hermitage, and yesterday for the first time I went to Mass, and consequently for the first time also I saw everybody and was seen by everybody; but in truth it was such an effort that on getting back to my room I was so overcome that any one but I would have fainted. I ought to re-read your three last letters but I really cannot. I have become a most sad creature, and speak only in monosyllables. Everything distresses me, and I never like to be an object of pity."

CHAPTER XIII

The Grand Duke Paul and his mother—They fear and dislike each other—The birth of Paul's first child Alexander—Paul's eccentric behaviour—His treatment of his wife—Dreads that she may plot against him—His conduct towards those around him—Love of soldiering—The Empress and her eldest grandson—She desires that the Grand Duke should travel—How her plans were carried out—Count Panin inspires him with dread—He wishes to remain in Russia—His farewell to the Court—Dispatches of the English Ambassador—The Empress finds a new favourite—She describes him to Grimm—His extravagance and her jealousy—His coldness causes bitter suffering to her Majesty—Patiomkin's scheme to get rid of him—A dramatic situation leads to his dismissal—The last of the favourites—The Crimea is annexed by Russia—Visited by Catherine—Extraordinary scenes prepared by Patiomkin—She meets her old lover Poniatowski—A second war between Russia and Turkey—Patiomkin returns to the capital—His love of splendour—He entertains the Czarina magnificently—His illness and death.

WHILE the Imperial favourites rose and fell, came and went, the heir to the throne of Russia lived almost in obscurity. As the Empress Elizabeth had treated her nephew Peter, so did Catherine treat her son Paul. Always kept in subordination to his mother who disliked and secretly feared him, none were, up to the time of his first marriage, permitted to enter his presence save those

whom she approved of. Passing years and the event of his second marriage brought him little more liberty than might be enjoyed by a State prisoner; for though he held drawing-rooms of his own, he took but a minor part in Court ceremonies; though by right of birth Generalissimo of the Russian army, he never led a regiment to battle; though nominally Admiral of the Baltic, he had only once been allowed to see the fleet at Cronstadt; though next in succession to the Crown, he was not permitted to take part in the councils, or become acquainted with the business of State. Added to all this he was surrounded by those who reported his every word and act to his mother; he was treated by Patiomkin as a person of no consequence, a slight which he resented as far as he dared; and while the favourites had jewels, wealth, slaves, properties, and palaces given to them, he and his wife were restricted to a meagre income.

Seemingly without ambition and naturally timid, he made no effort to assert himself and enter into conspiracies that might end his bondage and give him the sovereignty; yet so fearful was his mother of such attempts on his part, that whenever she left the capital she either took him with her, or left him in charge of those on whom she could rely, and who were pledged to seize and bring him to her on the first whisper they might hear of an insurrection. Unfortunately there was little in his character or bearing likely

to win him partisans or friends. Small and insignificant in figure, dark, heavy browed, with small eyes and underhung lip, he was hideous in appearance, awkward in gait, brusque in manner, suspicious, sulky-tempered, superstitious, full of whims and humours, stubborn, and uncertain in his moods. The birth of his first child, Alexander Paulovitch, December 12th, 1777, brought him some slight consideration. The whole nobility vied with each other in the splendour of their entertainments to celebrate the event; that given by Patiomkin costing fifty thousand roubles; while all of them were surpassed by the magnificence of that to which they were bidden by the Empress, the dessert at supper being set out with jewels worth two millions sterling; while at the card tables, besides the stake in money played for at macao, a diamond valued at fifty roubles was given by her Imperial Majesty to each player who got nine, the highest point of the game. One hundred and fifty diamonds were distributed in this way at the feast.

No sooner was the infant born than it was taken from its mother, who henceforth was allowed to see it only at rare and stated times by the Empress, who took charge of it and made it her idol. The Grand Duchess, who in this and other ways had much to suffer, proved herself an example of all the domestic virtues, devoted herself to her husband, and humoured the strange whims that filled his mind and led him

to be considered eccentric if not insane. By many it was believed possible that after all he might be the son of the deposed Peter; first because he was despised and disliked by his mother, and secondly because he showed the same timidity, love of soldiering, and homage for the King of Prussia which the late unfortunate Czar had done. When, in 1780, Paul was allowed by his mother to build a palace for himself within the convenient distance of five versts from her own summer residence at Tsarskoe Selo, which was called Pavlofsky, he had more opportunity than had previously been given him of indulging in his passion for military parade, by drilling the soldiers allowed him as a guard. To these, who numbered as many Germans as were willing to join them, he introduced the Prussian drill, and changed their uniform so as to make it resemble as much as possible that of certain regiments in the service of Frederick. The detestation in which the Russians held such changes was not lessened because they drew upon them from the guards, the hated name of Prussians. The most insignificant trifles in the cut of their coats, the buttons of their gaiters, the tilt of their hats, became a source of worrying importance to his Imperial Highness, whose chief employment it became to manœuvre them all day long, and occasionally to beat them soundly with the cane he habitually carried. His treatment of the officers was not much better, for if he did not

strike, he swore at and rated them soundly before their men. One day all the officers of his battalion were put under arrest, because he imagined that they had saluted him awkwardly in filing off after drill; and for eight successive days he ordered them to be called out and to file off to salute him, sending them back regularly to the guard-house until he at last approved of the manner in which it was done.

A story is told of him that, passing unexpectedly and furtively one of the guard houses, the officer on duty not recognising him did not order out his men; upon which Paul instantly turned back, boxed the officer's ears, and had him put under arrest. This, however, was not so bad as his treatment of another officer, whose horse fell with him one day in exercising, when the Grand Duke rushed to him furiously, brandishing his cane, and calling out: "Get up, you rascal, get up," to which came the answer, "I cannot, your Highness, my leg is broken"; hearing which Paul spat on him and turned away swearing. Near his palace at Pavlofsky he had a terrace made on high ground, from which he could see the sentinels, which it was his delight to station wherever there was room for a sentry box. Here he generally spent that portion of the day which was not passed in drilling his men, watching them closely through a glass. Frequently servants were dispatched to a sentinel with orders to button or unbutton a little more of his

coat, to carry his musket higher or lower, to walk at a greater or lesser distance from his box; while occasionally Paul himself would suddenly rush off, perhaps half a mile, to deliver personally these important directions, and would cane the soldier or put a rouble in his pocket, according to whether he was angry or pleased with the man.

The village of Pavlofsky, situated a short distance from the palace, was for no particular reason guarded by sentinels, whose duty it was to take down the names of all who entered or quitted it, and to find out where they were going and what they wanted, all of which valuable information was submitted to his Imperial Highness. Not only that, but every evening each house was visited to discover if strangers were there; while any man who had a dog, or who wore a round hat and might therefore be supposed to be a Frenchman, was put under arrest. A village which previously, because of its beautiful situation, had been much frequented, soon became deserted, as people turned out of their way to avoid it, and if sighting the Grand Duke at a distance, made haste to shun him, a singularity of conduct which roused his suspicions, and urged him to have them pursued, questioned, and arrested.

Happiness could scarcely have been possible to the wife of such a creature, even had he loved her; but though prudent in all ways, handsome and dignified,

a woman of refinement, something of a musician, an artist, a skilful embroiderer, and an obedient wife, she was unable to gain his affections; a happiness won without trouble, without seeking, by one of her maids-of-honour, Mademoiselle Nelidof, who was diminutive, ugly, bad-mannered, and had many traits in common with himself. For all that he carefully watched the Grand Duchess, and in his absence placed spies around her to report on her movements, her words, her glances. This was not from jealousy, but from absurd fears lest she was plotting against him. The slightest attention paid to her by one of his suite, even when that individual was among the number of those few friends of which he could boast, threw his Imperial Highness into a rage with his wife, and caused the courtier to be dismissed. One day when she addressed in a low voice Prince Alexis Kourakin, a confidant of the Grand Duke, the latter burst into a paroxysm of passion, and rushing to her cried out: "Madam, I see you want to make yourself friends that you may act the part of Catherine over again, but be assured you will not find a Peter III. in me." Prince Alexis Kourakin withdrew from Pavlofsky, while the Grand Duchess was from that moment placed under greater restraint than before; for she was not allowed to write a letter or send a message without the permission of her wretched little husband, who selected those who were to accompany her in the walks

she was allowed to take, who were to attend her parties, or who were even to talk to her. Later still he appointed Prince Neswitsky as a guard who was to overhear all her conversations, read her letters, and never quit her presence until relieved of his duties by her husband.

His friends were treated by him in a manner scarcely less singular, with one exception. This was a young Turk, who had been brought as a slave to St. Petersburg, bred at the Court, given the name of Kutayschoff from having escaped the general massacre at Kutaysk, made his barber, chief valet, and afterwards raised to be his Grand Equerry, and given vast estates and great sums of money. His influence over his master exceeded that of his wife or mistress, for which reason the Turk's intercession was bought at a high figure by those who fell under the displeasure of His Imperial Master. As for Paul's friends, they rose and fell with startling suddenness and without apparent cause. Treating them at first with friendliness and giving them proofs of his reliance, he sooner or later repented of his frankness, believing it might be used against him by those whom he now suspected to be creatures of the reigning favourite, or spies placed about him by his Imperial mother. Those who were forced into the service of his Court took every possible opportunity and made every imaginable excuse for absenting themselves from it, and for escaping from their duties, to

fulfil which was to receive insult, and to add to the number of disgraced favourites, cashiered officers, and banished domestics that swarmed the empire.

Always under suspicion of striving to supplant him, the Grand Duchess, that she might be under his own eyes, was frequently forced in illness or health, in good weather or bad, to take her place beside her husband while he marched his soldiers backwards and forwards, at wearisome reviews and parades, so that she was obliged to remain in the saddle for many weary hours, sometimes drenched to the skin, or covered with snow, hungry, or ready to faint from fatigue, but all the while—though extremely haughty to others—smiling on his efforts, his caning of the soldiers, his swearing at the officers. Occasionally she was placed on high ground to serve as a point of attack to his troops, while he gallantly defended the approaches. One day he stationed her on the ruinous balcony of an old wooden house round which he drew up his suffering soldiers for its defence. The enemy on this occasion was represented by a German, Major Lindener, who had prepared a plan of attack that was to cover him with glory. While Paul prepared for a daring repulse and his wife remained fixed in the balcony, a deluge of rain fell from leaden skies. His Imperial Highness, restless and anxious, galloped his horse from one point to another, looking in vain for the enemy, who failed to make his appearance. Hours passed, the rain

increased, but no besieging army could be seen. Paul visited, changed, and reinforced his advanced posts, sent out parties to reconnoitre and scour the country, and even galloped to meet the enemy, who still made no appearance. At last his Imperial Highness sent aides-de-camp to inquire the cause of Lindener's non-appearance, when it was found that having entangled himself and his troops in gardens, being bewildered by the multiplicity of directions that had been given him by the Grand Duke, and soaked to the skin by rain, he declared he suffered from a colic, and leaving his men to take care of themselves, hurried home. "Paul," says Masson who tells the story, "enraged at having made such an excellent disposition of his forces in vain, spurred on his horse as hard as he could gallop to the palace, there to digest his rage, leaving his wife, his army, and those whom he had invited to see this famous manœuvre wet to the skin. They had waited from five in the morning, till one in the afternoon; and much in this manner did the Grand Duchess spend all her mornings with one or two ladies at most; one of whom was Paul's favourite and received all the attention of him and his courtiers."

Like so many poor creatures who have nothing to recommend them mentally or physically, he entertained an unbounded opinion of himself, of the profound respect owing to him, of the submissive obedi-

ence due to his will. As an illustration of the latter trait it may be mentioned that one day when driving through a marshy forest he, as was not unusual with him, suddenly decided to turn back and see what was going on at the palace during his absence. On giving his orders to the coachman to turn round that individual answered: "Presently, your Highness, the road here is too narrow." Boiling with rage Paul shouted: "What, rascal, won't you turn immediately?" which was lost upon the coachman, who caught sight of a spot where it was possible to obey; but before he could do so Paul commanded his equerry to arrest and punish the fellow. The equerry explained that the carriage would be turned in a moment, at which Paul still more angry shouted: "You are a pitiful scoundrel like himself. Let him overturn the carriage, let him break my neck, but let him obey me and turn when I command him"; and to satisfy him the coachman was taken from the box and soundly caned. Still more remarkable was the scene he enacted in the streets of St. Petersburg one day, for on his horse stumbling he immediately dismounted, held a council with his attendants regarding the punishment due to this careless beast, and sentenced him to receive fifty lashes with a whip on the spot. He himself counted them, and ended by saying to the horse: "There, sir, that is for having stumbled under the Grand Duke." It will not be wondered at that he was the subject of

ridicule and the object of dislike to the courtiers at large.

As children were born to their Imperial Highnesses, they were taken from them by their grandmother, who watched over them with the greatest care, and who at the earliest stage possible to them, made them her companions and playfellows ; the eldest, Mr. Alexander, as she called him in her correspondence, being her favourite. "I dote on the little monkey," she tells Grimm. "Every day we make new acquaintances, that is to say, that of every toy we make ten or twelve, and we try which of the two can best develop his talents. It is extraordinary how industrious we have become. After dinner my little monkey comes back as often as he likes, and he spends three or four hours a day in my room." For her little monkey she designed a costume which she regarded as a stroke of genius on her part and then made it, and subsequently taught him his alphabet. Later on she says : "He will, to my thinking, become a most wonderful personage indeed, provided the secondaterie do not hinder his progress" ; the secondaterie being the child's parents. With them the young princes were allowed to spend a couple of hours twice a week in summer, while the Grand Duke and Grand Duchess were in winter permitted to visit them at specific times ; having to content themselves with hearing of them in the intervals from the valets de chambre, whom they bribed to bring

them information. When the time came for the boys to begin their education, a plan for its conduct chiefly taken from the works of Rousseau and Locke, was drawn up by the Empress, who desired that they should be instructed in experimental philosophy, in all the sciences, and in literature; but they "were to be taught neither poetry nor music, because it would occupy too much of their time to attain excellence in either."

Some idea of the strained feeling existing between the Czarina and her son may be had by relating the manner in which the Grand Duke was induced to travel in the autumn of 1781. The Empress having for political reasons established a friendship with the Emperor of Austria, much to the vexation of the King of Prussia, was anxious Paul should visit the Court of Vienna, that a bond of amity might be formed between it and that of St. Petersburg, and that the hold which Frederick II. and his paid dependants had over his Imperial Highness might be loosened. As Catherine well knew the suspicious nature of the latter, and the opposition her plan would meet with from those who surrounded him, she saw that if the suggestion of his visit to Austria came from her, it would rouse doubts and misgivings in his narrow mind, which would be encouraged by those who influenced his opinion. Accordingly, by Patiomkin's advice, she entered into a plan which she hoped would

forward her design. She therefore summoned a nephew of Count Panin, Prince Repnin, and treating him with apparent confidence while in reality she concealed her real object, told him she was anxious the Grand Duke should travel, that he might acquire experience and knowledge, and rid himself of several prejudices which were hurtful to his character. She continued by saying that if she were to express her wish on the point to her son, he would regard it as a design to get rid of him for a time, and it was therefore her desire that he should voluntarily ask permission to go abroad. To bring this about Prince Repnin was requested to impress their Imperial Highnesses with the pleasure and advantage they would gain by visiting foreign countries and seeing cities, peoples, and governments different from those of Russia.

Prince Repnin obeyed the instructions given him so well, that in a little while both Paul and his wife were continually complaining that they were not allowed to leave the empire and travel like ordinary subjects of her Majesty. While in this mood they were surprised to receive from the Emperor of Austria who was in the plot, a pressing invitation to visit his Court, where he said he would also ask the Grand Duchess's mother and other of her relatives to meet them. He was certain that if they asked permission to travel from the Empress, so indulgent a mother would not refuse it. At that the Grand Duke's old

Governor, Count Panin, was consulted and he not being in her Majesty's secret advised them to make a tour whose chief object should be to establish, or rather to cement, a closer friendship with the Court of Berlin, in whose pay he was.

In the middle of June their Imperial Highnesses waited on the Empress and with great nervousness and in expectation of refusal, timidly asked leave to go abroad. Her Majesty heard their request with evident surprise and uneasiness, telling them they had placed her in a very embarrassing situation ; for if she granted what they asked she must deprive herself for a long time of their society, while if she refused she would prevent them from receiving a knowledge and experience that could not but be valuable to them. At that they urged their wishes more strongly, and after a long conversation she, with apparent reluctance, gave her consent to their travelling, on condition that she should draw up the plan of their journey and name their attendants. As this had been already done, the Empress a few days later sent them a list of the persons who were to form their suite, of the countries through which they should journey, of which Prussia was not one, and specified the time of their absence. When the Grand Duchess begged that the Court of Berlin might be visited by them, she was angrily and peremptorily refused ; as were also later requests of the same kind made by Frederick and his agents.

Their Imperial Highnesses were delighted at the project of their visit, talked all day long of the graciousness of the Austrian Emperor, and for two months during which preparations were being made, lived on such terms of friendship and even of affection with the Czarina as they had never done before. Then came a sudden abrupt change, caused by the return from the country of Count Panin. Having by some unknown means learned Prince Repnin's secret, and having received messengers disguised as merchants and travellers sent by the King of Prussia, who bade him hurry to St. Petersburg and prevent the visit to Vienna of their Imperial Highnesses, he obeyed his master as promptly as his failing health would permit. On arriving he at once told the Grand Duke that his request to travel, which he thought voluntary, was in reality the result of a deep laid plot by those who made him a dupe ; that his leaving the country was probably the first act in a plot which would prevent him from ever returning ; that his children would perhaps be taken from him ; and hinted at the unprincipled and ambitious character of Patiomkin, and of those who surrounded the Empress. "Even she herself did not escape his animadversions," says Sir James Harris. "He said such things that even in cypher and by messenger my pen cannot write."

The impression he made on the timid mind of

the Grand Duke was so powerful that it entirely unhinged him, and full of alarm he and his wife waited on the Empress and told her that they were not willing to leave the empire, giving it as their excuse that they wished to remain until assured of the perfect recovery of their children, who had just been inoculated. A commotion followed, the post horses for the journey were countermanded, couriers on the point of setting out were stopped, and neither solicitation nor authoritative language on the part of her Majesty, had the slightest effect on them. After a couple of days during which the whole Court was in a state of confusion and disorder, the Empress by the advice of those around her, told them they must undertake a journey for which preparations had already been made, not only in Russia, but in the Courts they were to visit ; fixed the date of their departure ; and then spoke to these frightened children with such gentleness and kindness that she partially soothed their fears.

On the following Wednesday evening, September 26th, 1781, they, by command, held a Court to say farewell, when both appeared with red eyes, their manner showing perturbation and extreme depression. Their departure was fixed for the following Sunday. Two hundred and forty horses were to carry them and their suite of sixty persons to the confines of the Russian empire, after which the number

of those accompanying them was to be greatly reduced. On that afternoon their Imperial Highnesses set out on their journey from the Summer Palace of Tsarskoe Selo. Previous to starting they took leave of their children in the private apartments of her Majesty, when so agitated and fearful was their mother that she fainted. On her recovery the Empress walked with her son and daughter-in-law on either side of her to the antechamber, and there embraced and said farewell to them with much feeling, after which she hurried back to her grandchildren; while the Grand Duchess was led in an almost insensible condition to the coach. There they found Patiomkin and Panin awaiting them, the latter of whom whispered some words to Paul, who without answering, hurried into the carriage, called out to the driver to hurry forward as fast as possible, and then pulled down the blinds. "There is not the smallest doubt," says Sir James Harris in speaking of this scene, "that this very uncommon sensibility of their Imperial Highnesses does not arise solely from quitting their children. Count Panin has filled their heads with apprehensions and they are gone away under the strongest impressions of terror. He plays a very deep stake; as he may be assured the Empress is not unacquainted with the part he has acted, and will not leave such conduct unnoticed. She treated him on Sunday with the most marked contempt, and

her behaviour had such an effect on him as to create a visible discomposure on his placid and unchanging countenance."

The English Minister's prediction was quickly verified, for a few days after the Grand Duke's departure, Count Panin received an order to dismiss his secretary and deliver up his papers, and was told that though he would be suffered to remain at the Council Board, he was to consider his place there merely nominal. The result was that he fell into a violent fever, to remedy which he was bled and blistered. His vitality must have been strong to survive such treatment, for he lingered some eighteen months longer, and died March 31st, 1783, fourteen days before Gregory Orloff.

Meantime their Imperial Highnesses travelled through Poland and Austria to Italy, after which they visited the court of Versailles, where they were magnificently entertained by Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, then in the last days of their glory. In returning home the Imperial couple passed through Holland.

During the whole time of their absence their movements and words were carefully reported day by day to the Empress, by those whom she had placed for that purpose in their suite. On their part they were probably no less anxious to learn what passed in their absence at St. Petersburg, but their endeavour

to gain such news was unsuccessful, as the letters written to them from there by Bibikof, though addressed to one of their retainers, were seized, opened, and detained, while their writer was sent to Siberia. The enormous debts they contracted while travelling could scarcely have led them to expect a hearty welcome on their return. This was heralded by the arrival in St. Petersburg of over two hundred boxes "filled with gauzes, pompons, and other trash from Paris, together with various designs for preposterous head dresses," intended by the Grand Duchess for her adornment. As the Empress from the first days of her reign had adopted a Russian costume, and had long considered that the importation of French fabrics ordered by the ladies of the Court and the wives of the nobles, interfered with the trade of Russia, she considered this the most fitting opportunity to forbid the wearing of flounces, trimmings, and blondes, and to declare that head ornaments should not exceed two and a half inches in height. Her orders, says Sir James Harris, "were aimed at the Grand Duchess, who returns passionately fond of the French nation, their dress and manners; and who besides has settled on a correspondence to be carried on with Mademoiselle Bertin and other French agents of a like cast. It is impossible the Empress could have wounded her Imperial Highness in a more sensible part. I am

certain when the news of it reaches her, which it will at Riga, that it will hurt her more feelingly than any event which might have affected the glory and welfare of the empire."

Their Imperial Highnesses arrived at St. Petersburg on the first day of November 1782, where their meeting with the Czarina took place in private. "It lasted only a very few minutes, and probably no great joy or affection was expressed on either side," says the authority just quoted. A month later he writes that their conduct had been much more discreet than could have been expected. "They live almost entirely by themselves, have dismissed from their society their former favourites, and seem as if they wished to be guided wholly by the will of the Empress alone. It is difficult to say to what this unexpected propriety of behaviour is attributable. It must I believe be partly imputed to their having found Count Panin so weakened in his intellect as to be no longer able to afford them either support or advice. It partly too may be supposed to arise from their having found themselves betrayed by almost every person who accompanied them on their journey, and by the strange reports that had reached them, that the Empress intended on their return to remove the Grand Duke from the succession, and at her death bestow the crown on her eldest grandchild. From whatever cause it proceeds, it is certainly wise and

judicious; but unfortunately so strong are the Empress's prejudices against them, it by no means finds with her the approbation it deserves. She now calls them reserved, sulky, and solitary, that they are spoilt by foreign connexions, and cannot return to the habits of their country. In short, having in her own mind previously resolved to be displeased with them, it is not in their power to please her." Within eight months of their return, the writer of this letter, Sir James Harris, was recalled at his own request; for not only was his health broken down by the rigorous climate of Russia, but since his entry into diplomacy he had spent twenty thousand pounds of his private fortune, the greater part of which had been dispersed in St. Petersburg; not only with the object of securing partisans, but in outbidding the bribes of his political opponents and guarding himself against spies; for as he states in one of his letters, no person in his household was too insignificant to escape the temptation of a bribe from his opponents, who were ever watchful to obtain a sight of his papers, or the temporary possession of his keys, so that when he left his secretary writing, it was his custom to lock him up, not from mistrust of his honesty, but in fear lest he might for a moment leave the door of his room open. He left St. Petersburg in September 1783, and was succeeded by Alleyne Fitzherbert, afterwards Lord St. Helens, who

was appointed Envoy Extraordinary to the Court of Russia.

After the death of Lanskoi, life became a blank to her Majesty for some time. Three months after her bereavement she told Grimm that she was still inconsolable for her irreparable loss, that though she was getting accustomed to the sight of human faces around her, yet her heart bled as at the first moment of her grief, and that she suffered the tortures of the damned. Occasionally she had interviews with her Ministers ; she braced herself to appear in public ; she strove to distract her mind by writing comedies or by reading ; and to obtain the sleep of exhaustion by excessive exercise. Then, ten months from the date on which her lover had been taken from her, she wrote to her confidant Grimm that she had become "calm and serene once more, because with the help of my friends I have made an effort over myself. We began with a comedy, which every one says was charming ; this then proves the return of vigour and gaiety. The monosyllables are banished, and I can no longer complain of not having those about me whose cares and affections are calculated to cheer and distract me, but it needed some time to accustom oneself to it. In short, in one word as in a hundred, I have a very capable friend and one well worthy of being so."

This friend—selected from a crowd of expectant

candidates, chief among whom was the son of the Princess Daschkaw who used all her influence to gain the post of favourite for him—was a lieutenant named Yermolof, a tall, fair youth of a serious disposition and reserved manner, whose love of decorum was shocked while his fortune was made by being suddenly called to this high position. Though he owed this to Patiomkin, he was not blind to the faults of that individual, and on his pointing out to the Empress the heavy taxes that were being levied on certain of her subjects by Patiomkin for his own benefit, the latter, incensed by such conduct, said to her Majesty : "Madame, there is but one alternative ; you must either dismiss Yermolof or me ; for so long as you keep that white negro, I shall not set my foot within the palace." At that Catherine, who was swayed by Patiomkin and cared but little for Yermolof, sent the latter orders to travel, by way of completing his education. During his reign of sixteen months she had given him one hundred and fifty thousand roubles, together with two estates, on one of which were three thousand peasants.

His successor Momonof, was the descendant of one of the oldest families in Russia, and what was rare in that country, was a man of education, of taste and accomplishments ; for he spoke several languages fluently, wrote verses and comedies, sketched prettily, talked wittily, and danced to perfection, so that as the elderly lady who became enamoured of this youth

of six-and-twenty said of him, he was "a priceless creature." Loving to give nicknames to all surrounding her, Catherine called him Red Coat; and under this sobriquet wrote of him to Grimm, whom she confidently and shamelessly furnished with an account of her amours and their objects. "This Red Coat," she writes, "envelops a being who unites a great deal of gaiety and uprightness to a most excellent heart. As for wit, he has enough for four, an unlimited fund of gaiety, great originality in the conception of things and in the way of rendering them, an admirable education, singularly instructed in all that can give brilliancy to wit. We hide our love of poetry as if it were murder; we are passionately fond of music; our conception in all things is of a rare facility. God only knows what we know by heart. We declaim, we jest, we have the tone of the best society, we are excessively polite, we write in Russian and in French as few among us can write, alike as regards the style and the matter. Our outer responds perfectly to our inner man; our features are very regular; we have two superb black eyes with eyebrows outlined as one rarely sees; above the middle height, noble in manner, easy in demeanour; in a word we are as solid within as we are agile, strong, and brilliant without. I am convinced that if you met this Red Coat, you would ask what his name was, if you did not guess it at once."

Like most of his countrymen he was desperately avaricious, and not satisfied with the customary present of two hundred thousand roubles, of jewels to the value of eighty thousand roubles, and of estates, he fraudulently extorted sums from her Majesty, by making an inordinate use of the permission she gave him and Patiomkin to draw upon Strekalof, her private treasurer. One day, when in auditing her accounts the Empress found that the Imperial coffers were not only empty, but were in debt to the amount of five million roubles, she severely reprimanded Strekalof, who, says Castera, "in his justification produced a heap of drafts from Patiomkin and Momonof, mostly written on vile scraps of paper. On her mentioning it to Momonof, he turned the affair into a joke, and all was made up." Idolised by Catherine, there was nothing she could refuse him; while so careful was she of his morals, that he was seldom permitted to leave the palace save in her company, lest temptation might waylay his youth. When on one rare occasion he was allowed to accept an invitation to dinner given by the French Minister, the Comte de Ségur, to which men only were bidden, his absence was considered either so insupportable to her, or so dangerous to him, that one of the Imperial carriages was sent for him before the meal ended; so that on rising from the table and looking through the windows, he saw it waiting to carry him back to his gilded prison.

One of the foreign Ministers who saw and reported so much of the games that went on at the Court, says that Momonof felt a shame that he made no attempt to conceal. The handsome rewards he received enabled him to endure his position for some three years, towards the end of which time when he had become a wealthy man, his feelings grew so cold to the Empress as to cause her bitter suffering. At first it was an oppression of the chest, and then a scruple of conscience that distressed and kept him apart from her ; but eventually, as he openly avoided her when possible, and appeared deeply depressed when they met, she, unable to endure such conduct any longer, told him that a separation had become necessary. Not only was she willing to give him handsome presents, but her generosity went so far as to offer him a wife who was a wealthy young heiress. At that he became confused, trembled, and finally breaking down confessed that he was in love with one of her Majesty's maids-of-honour, Mademoiselle Shtcherbatof, adding that he had promised her marriage. "Imagine what I felt," says Catherine pathetically.

Though her pride and her affections were sorely wounded by the behaviour of the man she loved and the woman she had trusted, she was magnanimous enough to forgive them and to consent to their marriage. "I have never been the tyrant of any one,

and I hate constraint," she truly said. There was something more pathetic than ridiculous in the fact that she clung to the idea that this man, her junior by more than thirty years, yet loved her; for she declared that the old affection in him was not yet dead, that he continued to follow her with his eyes, and that both he and his bride elect were wretched. Of this she considered a proof was given by his request that he and his wife should be allowed to remain at Court as before; to which she would not listen. Having assisted at the bride's toilet, an honour usually paid to ladies of rank, and given the bridegroom valuable presents, she sent them to settle at Moscow. In writing to Grimm of this change in her life, the Empress, speaking of herself as the pupil of Mademoiselle Cardel says that, having found the Red Coat "worthy rather of pity than of anger, and punished for life by the silliest of passions, which has not put the laughers on his side, and has only won him the repute for ingratitude, she has merely put an end to all that, to the satisfaction of the interested parties, at the earliest opportunity." She adds in a tone of satisfaction, "There is reason to believe that the domestic arrangements do not get on well at all."

No sooner had Momonof vanished than the last man to hold the post of favourite was appointed to that office. This was Plato Zubof, a lieutenant in

the guards, aged twenty-two, who in the summer of 1789, while on duty at the palace of Tsarskoe Selo, first attracted the attention of the Empress. The second of four brothers, descended from a noble, ambitious, and dishonest family, Plato was slim, dark, handsome and well built. Referring to his complexion, Catherine playfully called him the little blackie, and to his want of years she styled him the child, in writing of him to Patiomkin, without whose permission or knowledge she had dismissed the late favourite and selected the present. Patiomkin did not object to the deposition of Momonof, whom he described as a mixture of indolence and egotism, a Narcissus to excess, who thought of nothing but himself; but he decidedly disapproved of her Majesty choosing a favourite without first asking his sanction, and therefore not only depriving him of a prerogative, but possibly raising to a high position a man who might prove inimical to his interests, merely that she might please herself. Aware of this, Catherine as gently and playfully as possible broke the news of her new aberration, by telling the great man that she had come back to life, like a fly that the cold had frozen; that she was well and gay again; and that all was owing to the child "who thinks you are cleverer, and more amusing, and more amiable than all those about you"; but adds this wily woman, "keep this quiet, for he does not know that I know that."

To estimate the supreme power Patiomkin exercised, not only over Catherine but over the whole empire, it is necessary to mention that it was chiefly owing to his ambition and energy that the Crimea had been detached from Turkey and annexed to Russia in 1783, at a cost of about ten million pounds, and immense loss of life including the slaughter in cold blood, by order of Patiomkin, of thirty thousand Tartars of both sexes and of every age. For such services he was given by the appreciative Empress the title of Prince of the Tauria, that being the ancient name of the Crimea; made Governor of the Tauria; Grand Admiral of the Euxine; and presented with a magnificent marble palace which she had built for him at St. Petersburg. In 1786 in compliance with his wishes, the Empress consented to visit her new conquests, not only to celebrate her victory over a humbled enemy, but to display her power and splendour to surrounding countries, that she might awe and prepare them for the achievement of her highest ambition, the complete conquest of Turkey, and the placing of her second grandson Constantine on the throne of the ancient Greek emperors; so that two members of her family, governing two mighty empires, might subvert Europe and Asia to their rule.

The difficulties of this journey would have seemed insurmountable to all but Patiomkin, for the distance to be covered exceeded two thousand kilometres,

through a great part of which a road had to be made, while the herculean labour was accomplished of breaking and destroying certain rocks that might interfere with the navigation of the galley on which she would embark on the Dnieper. Seven million roubles were devoted to this triumphal progress that occupied six months. On January 18th, 1787, the Empress started from St. Petersburg in an immense sleigh built for the purpose, which was fitted up as a room in which eight persons could move with comfort, consult the books with which it was furnished, or play cards at its tables. This was drawn by no less than thirty horses fresh relays of which were waiting at every station, while as the weather was bitterly cold, immense fires blazed at regular distances to temper the atmosphere.

Her Majesty was accompanied by the reigning favourite, her ladies of honour, the chief officers of the Court, the Ambassadors of Austria, France, and Spain, and the English Envoy, to each of whom Catherine had before leaving presented a fur cap, a muff, and a pelisse of sables. Patiomkin having gone on in advance had prepared all things for her Majesty. Every house in which she rested had either been newly built or newly furnished for the occasion ; new linen was used at every meal after which it became the property of the people of the house, or of the servants, to whom also fell the plate which was allowed to serve

the Empress and her suite but once. Twenty-one days were occupied in reaching Kief, where she found awaiting her eighty ships, having on board three thousand men, ready to take her down the Borysthenes through the country of the Cossacks to that of the Tartars. On the decks handsome rooms had been constructed, comfortably furnished and hung with silk, each member of the suite having not only a bed but a dressing-room ; while each ship has its band.

On their slow voyage the most wonderful and enchanting sights presented themselves, which led those who gazed on them in surprise, to imagine they were really witnessing splendid theatrical tableaux. For everywhere they stopped they saw, not the dreary and arid desert they expected, but prairies covered with herds of sheep and goats, attended by shepherds playing on pipes, in the foreground of which rose picturesque villages and towns peopled, not by the old but by youths and maidens brightly dressed, who tripped down to the shore as they might to the foot-lights, singing the quaint airs of their native land. At every stopping-place the same scene animated with people strikingly alike was presented, the explanation being that Patiomkin, who had suddenly developed the talents of an admirable stage manager, had by his all-powerful will forced these people to leave their homes in Little Russia and betake themselves to the shores of the Dnieper, so that in passing, the Empress and

her guests might see, not deserted plains, but happy villages, with loyal people ready to welcome and acclaim her. No sooner had her Majesty's galleys moved onwards, than these people taking cross roads by night, transplanted themselves to the next pasteboard village on her route, and went through the same performances of rushing down to the shore and singing their native songs.

It is stated that over a thousand villages in Little Russia were in this way depopulated of their inhabitants and of their flocks, to station themselves on the Dnieper, and that in their long journey homewards many of them died from fatigue and want.

At one point of this progress, Kaniof, the Empress was met by her old lover Poniatowski, who had spent three million roubles on his journey. When on boarding her ship he came face to face with Catherine for the first time for many years, she was deeply affected, but he, according to Castera, "preserved his entire presence of mind and discoursed with great composure." They then retired to her sitting-room, where for over half an hour they talked in private, probably reviving memories of days when they had met by stealth and in fear, when unsympathetic spies and the dread of separation had made wretched, days that now seemed to them happy pages in the history of their eventful lives. Afterwards they dined together in public, her Majesty at the end of the feast decorating him with

the ribbon of the Order of St. Andrew. Patiomkin, who had also arrived at Kaniof, and who had never seen Poniatowski, of whom he had heard much, was greatly interested in him, and on becoming acquainted with him was delighted with Stanislaus Augustus who still preserved his graciousness of manner and personal fascination. Another individual, Momonof, at that moment the reigning favourite, also regarded him with watchful attention, and much to the gratification of her aging Majesty, appeared horribly jealous of him, until to allay all doubts of her inconstancy, and to appease her darling, she spoke of the tedium she had endured during her private interview with her former lover.

At Kaidak the Empress and her suite disembarked amid a scene of indescribable confusion, for great difficulty was found in conveying to Kherson, thirty leagues distant, not only a great concourse of people, but the quantities of plate, luggage, provisions, bedding, and carriages, which the ships contained. However, her Majesty arrived at Kherson, where she passed under triumphal arches on which were inscribed in Greek letters the words, "This way to Byzantium." Here she was met by the Emperor Joseph, who had travelled from Austria to greet her. Though his Imperial Majesty must have been impressed by the expenditure, barbaric splendour, and profusion surrounding Catherine, he was not less struck, as his correspondence

shows, by the caprices which she tolerated in Momonof, whom he describes as a mere child quite out of his element, and who while playing whist with their Imperial Majesties, would occasionally use the chalk with which the score was marked, to draw caricatures upon the table while they patiently waited until his scrawl was finished.

Together the Emperor and Empress visited the inland parts of the Crimea, going as far as Bakhchisarai and Starikrim, being greeted everywhere they rested by some unexpected sight, such as a mountain artificially lighted, so as to seem consumed by an unquenchable fire; or an exact reproduction of the famous battle in which Charles XII. was routed by Peter the Great, in which about one hundred and fifty thousand of her own soldiers took part. She returned to St. Petersburg on July 22nd (1787), and soon afterwards her second war against the Turks was declared.

This was undertaken by Patiomkin as commander-in-chief, with one hundred and sixty thousand men at his disposal. This extraordinary individual, who has been described by the Prince de Ségur as a man of genius in the study but the most feeble and undecided of men in the field, took no active part in the sieges or engagements of the war that followed, leaving them to be conducted by the able generals of his staff. His mode of living, during the years

of struggle that followed and in the face of carnage and desolation, was not less extravagant and ostentatious than that he had led in times of peace in the shadow of the Court. For in the suite of this spoilt child of God, as he styled himself, travelled six hundred servants, a corps de ballet, two hundred musicians, a crowd of sycophants collected from all nations, and a seraglio of court ladies chiefly composed of the wives of his marshals and colonels. In the wooden houses built for him wherever he moved were heaped the riches of two worlds, his table was served with magnificent plate, the most costly of wines, the rarest of dishes. In rooms hung with embroideries he lounged on divans of satin trimmed with ribbons, surrounded by his women, and inhaling an atmosphere heavy with perfumes burning in dishes of gold.

Always swinging between extremes, he occasionally walked calmly about under a rain of bullets, and again hid in a cellar at the approach of danger. The sound of cannon was always unendurable to his highly strung nerves, and once on sending to inquire why he was disturbed by such noise, this commander-in-chief received word from the sarcastic General Pistor, "it is because the Russians and the Turks are at war." At one moment exultant and vivacious, he was at another gloomy and silent. Once in a mood of depression consequent on disaster and loss to his army, he announced his intention to the Empress to turn

monk. Catherine must have smiled at this suggestion of his taking the cowl, remembering the scene when he had first made such a proposal; then she had declared she would not stand between him and his vocation, but now when he was useful to her she scouted the idea as folly. The silence of a cell for him whose name was echoed throughout Europe and Asia was impossible, she told him.

Eventually, and after terrible slaughter, Russia succeeded in taking Otchakoff, Bender, and Ismael, and the war was practically at an end. In March 1791, Patiomkin made a triumphal entry into St. Petersburg with a pomp and splendour such as no European sovereign could equal, when he was received by the populace with stirring enthusiasm, and by the Empress with every mark of distinction. Dinners, fêtes, and concerts were given by her in his honour, she presented him with one hundred thousand roubles, a uniform blazing with diamonds, a marshal's bâton set with jewels, a palace close to her own which she had furnished at a cost of six hundred thousand roubles, and had a medal struck in his honour. He himself, says Castera in speaking of this time, "displayed a pomp which would have appeared excessive in the most splendid Court of Europe. The expense of his table alone on ordinary days was regularly about eight hundred roubles; it was furnished with the most exquisite dainties and the rarest fruits. In the depth of

winter he has bespoke long beforehand all the cherries of a tree in a greenhouse at a rouble a cherry."

Loving beautiful things, his palaces were filled with pictures brought to him from the galleries of Europe ; with violins for which he had paid exorbitant sums and then allowed to become covered with dust or gnawed by rats ; with statues and wonderful vases. But great as was the pleasure they gave him, it was as nothing in comparison to that afforded him by his marvellous collection of jewels. Seated at a table covered with black velvet, he spent hours in arranging and re-arranging them in the forms of crosses, stars, circles, and fantastic figures, occasionally holding them to the light, weighing them, and pouring them from one hand to the other that he might revel in the sight of their flaming colours. One day being in an eccentric mood, he took a sudden dislike to them and sold them all, only when they had left his possession to bewail their loss and to buy them back again at any price. Often it happened that he would pass a couple of hours walking up and down his apartments, moody and downcast, biting his nails, and speaking not a word to the score of sycophants who surrounded but did not dare to interrupt his thoughts. At other times he would lie on a divan waited on and watched over by the seraglio that had returned with him to St. Petersburg, to whom he did not deign to fling a word.

The amount of his riches was beyond his own knowledge. Once on hearing of some great library, he scornfully laughed and declared his was more valuable than any in possession of the greatest scholar in Europe; and opening a bookcase took from its shelf a box, shaped and lettered to imitate a volume, which like the others was filled with rouleaux of imperials and of ducats, all of them representing an immense fortune. For all that he had a strong aversion to paying his debts, no matter how inconsiderable, they being generally defrayed by her Majesty.

The depression he suffered from at this time, when he was at the zenith of his fame, followed by crowds of worshipping women, flattered by their greedy and complaisant husbands, hailed by the populace as a conqueror, and rewarded and fêted by his sovereign, was due to two causes; the first being that although but in his fifty-second year and enjoying vigorous health, he was haunted by an irrepressible idea that the end of his life was at hand; while the second was the hopeless infatuation of the Empress for the favourite Plato Zubof, whom he despised and detested. There is no doubt that apart from all vanity, ambition, or reward, Patiomkin had loved Catherine; and that traces of the old feeling survived a thousand infidelities, is probable. There is also proof that she had not only loved him, but that notwithstanding her moral aberrations he yet continued to exercise a certain fascination

over her. Many of her letters to him have been published, among them those she wrote to him during the recent war, in which she chides, encourages, and speaks to him "as to my best friend, my pupil, and scholar"; and in one of which, referring to certain fears he had expressed, she says, "Neither time, nor distance, nor any one in the world will ever change my way of thinking in regard to you, nor the feelings I have for you."

On his return to St. Petersburg in March 1791, this fascination had lost nothing of its glamour; for though to others he might seem beetle-browed, one-eyed, knock-kneed, and so ferocious-looking that he appeared like a wolf, yet with the privilege given to those who love to behold the object of their admiration in an aspect different from that in which he is seen by others, Catherine stated in a letter to the French Ambassador that to see Patiomkin "one would say that victories and successes absolutely beautified him. He has returned from the army as handsome as day, as brilliant as a star, wittier than ever, not biting his nails any more, giving fêtes, every one more glorious than the last."

The final entertainment given by him in honour of the Empress eclipsed in splendour all that had ever been seen in the Russian capital, and left its record behind like the trail of light that marks the passage of a falling meteor This was held in the Taurian Palace,

built for him by Catherine, at a cost of six hundred thousand roubles, an enormous edifice constructed chiefly of marble with innumerable rooms, a colonnaded hall for banquets, a quadrangular vestibule surrounded by double rows of pillars intended for concerts and plays, and a vast winter-garden ; space, light, splendour, the traces of illimitable wealth everywhere. For several months before the fête all kinds of artists of every nation were employed in decorating the palace, while over a hundred persons were rehearsed daily in the parts they were to play, and nothing was talked of in the capital by all classes but the splendour of the coming entertainment.

At six o'clock on the evening fixed for this, the Empress with her two grandsons, her Court, and the foreign Ministers set out in state for the Taurian Palace ; in front of which she found a countless multitude to whom not only food and drink but clothes had been freely given, and who hailed her with an outburst of joyous loyalty. Patiomkin, wearing the jewelled coat she had given him, assisted her from her carriage and led her to the vestibule that was suddenly filled by the triumphal strains of an orchestra of six hundred performers, which as unexpectedly as they had begun, subsided into silence that was instantly broken by a chorus of voices that hailed her as the supreme glory of her country. With these pæans ringing in her ears she was conducted to a

throne flashing with gold and scintillating with light, her Court filling the boxes at either side. Then at a given signal the curtain of the stage opposite her Majesty rose and gladdened her with a sight of twenty-four couples of the handsomest youths and maidens in the empire, wearing dresses that had cost ten million roubles, who danced to music specially written for their performance. This was followed by a sprightly comedy, by glorious choruses, by a procession representing the various Asiatic races swayed by the Empress, and a dance by figures clad in the costumes of every nation.

Then came a supper at which six hundred sat down with the Czarina to a table glittering with gold and silver plate under crystal lustres that blazed with light, and were reflected in countless mirrors and coloured stones upon the walls until they appeared consumed by flames. This banquet, at which, besides those at her Majesty's table, hundreds supped, was succeeded by a ball. To mark her appreciation and pleasure Catherine remained until midnight, and then with lingering and reluctance prepared to leave. As she re-entered the great vestibule on the way to her carriage, the chorus once more acclaimed her. With the enchanting voices of these singers ringing in her ears, with a dazzling glow of light and colour in her eyes, with excitement in her veins, she turned to thank the man beside her, her host, her hero, her former lover.

As she did so, he, overcome by an emotion he was unable to conquer, by a presentiment he dared not express, fell on his knees and clasping her outstretched hand kissed it fervently and let irrepressible tears fall on it. The Empress, herself not less affected, was unable to speak, and with dim eyes and a choking throat gently raised him, and then got into her carriage.

A few days later Patiomkin left the capital for ever. Journeying to Jassy to attend a congress which it was trusted would establish peace between Russia and Turkey, he, soon after reaching it, was attacked by fever. On hearing of this the Empress sent two doctors to him, but he having a contempt for their advice preferred to follow his own whims. Accordingly while burning with heat, he kept his windows wide open, poured eau de Cologne over his head in quantities, breakfasted on Hamburg ham, raw turnips, salted goose, and hung beef, dined with great appetite on the same kind of food, and at all times drank immense quantities of wines and liqueurs. Under such treatment the fever did not abate, and contrary to all advice he insisted on leaving Jassy, which he said did not suit him, for Nikolaief. He started for this town on the morning of October 15th (1791), but he had not gone three leagues when, declaring that he was choking, flushed, half-conscious, and weak, he scrambled out of his carriage, and threw himself down on the cool grass under a tree on the highway, where

a few minutes later he was seized by a fit of coughing, and immediately afterwards died in the arms of his favourite niece, the Countess Branika. When the news reached Catherine she fainted and was bled, and on recovering repeated over and over again, "How can I replace such a man?" In announcing the event to Grimm she says, "A rude and terrible blow struck me yesterday; my pupil, my friend, almost my idol, Prince Patiomkin of the Tauria is dead." For days and weeks she kept her room unwilling to see any one, and crying bitterly for one she would never meet again. His remains were taken to Kherson, where they were interred, the Empress erecting a mausoleum over them at a cost of one hundred thousand roubles. More than this, she paid the sum of eight hundred and fifty thousand roubles, part of the sum he had spent during the five last months of his residence in St. Petersburg, and allowed the immense fortune he had received from her to be divided among his relatives. At the time of his death it was freely reported that he had been poisoned by Plato Zubof; and though there was no truth in this rumour, it will presently be seen that the favourite was not misjudged in being accredited with such a crime.

CHAPTER XIV

The amazing ambition of the reigning favourite—His levées attended by crowds of noble and distinguished sycophants—They court the attention of his pet monkey—Description of the Empress at this period—Her two eldest grandsons—Catherine secretly resolves to make Alexander her successor—Sends for German princesses that he and his brother may select wives—The Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and her daughters—The final downfall of Poland brought about by the greed of her Majesty's lover—Insurrection of the Poles and gallant defence of their country—Thaddeus Kosciuszko leads the army—His bravery—Taken prisoner—Poniatowski is deposed and pensioned—Catherine desires her eldest granddaughter to marry the King of Sweden—His Majesty arrives at the Court of St. Petersburg and is splendidly received—The young couple meet and fall in love—He wishes the Grand Duchess to change her religion for his—The mistake of a frivolous Prime Minister—The Court assembles to witness the betrothal—Waiting for the bridegroom-elect—He refuses to appear—His dogged obstinacy—End of a painful scene—His interview with her Majesty and his departure from Russia—The future that awaited him and the Grand Duchess.

HAD Patiomkin lived, a struggle would have taken place between him and Plato Zubof, who avaricious, burning with ambition, and unscrupulous, had already determined to supplant him in the high positions he held. Death having taken the greater man, the lesser was saved much trouble; for with

the unopposed will of his adoring mistress who declared him "the greatest genius Russia has ever seen," he presently obtained control over all the military and civil offices of the empire, dominated the soldiers and statesmen who had won victories in warfare or diplomacy for their sovereign, and virtually became Emperor of All the Russias. In no eyes but his own and those of his sovereign had he the talents necessary for his high posts; and not only was he ignorant and incapable, but he was lazy and luxurious. Made Grand Master of the Artillery, Count and Prince, enriched beyond the dreams of avarice, presented with great tracts of country in Russia and Poland, and loaded with marvellous jewels, he regarded himself as the equal in power of the Czarina, spoke of himself in the plural, and behaved to all, including the Grand Duke, with amazing effrontery.

If it were not that historians and ambassadors, natives and foreigners, agree in the accounts given of his levées—which were held while his toilette was being made after the manner of the mistresses of the French kings—their description would seem incredible. About eleven o'clock in the morning the folding doors of the private apartments being flung open, Plato Zubof, wearing scarcely any clothing under the flowing folds of his gorgeous dressing-gown, sauntered with an air of disdain and languor into his dressing-room, where his coming had for some time been patiently awaited

by princes, marshals, generals, the first dignitaries of the empire, the highest state officials, courtiers of all ranks, suitors for places and favours, suppliants for mercy or justice for banished or ruined friends, together with grave ecclesiastics; while even a greater crowd of those not less distinguished were beaten back from the outer door by insolent valets who did not consider themselves sufficiently bribed to give the required permission to enter. With an affectation of dignity the favourite seated himself in a chair half filled with cushions and placed before an enormous mirror, when servants silently advanced, bowed profoundly, and began to dress and powder his hair. The cringing sycophants then drew nearer and formed a semicircle around him, each watching for a look of recognition, their anxious faces masked in smiles, none daring to sit down or to address him unless first spoken to. At times he never uttered a word during the whole morning; but occasionally when more mercifully inclined he permitted one of them to state his case, into which the hearer never deigned to enter, and usually replied by a nod or a gesture. While he was being perfumed, secretaries came and read reports or letters to him, to which he listened with an assumption of fatigue. Occasionally he signed a document or paper, those who benefited by such having had to pay exorbitant sums to the individuals who had brought them before him.

As if to increase the humiliation of his sycophants, he frequently, while ignoring them, amused himself by talking to his buffoon, or watched the antics of his pet monkey as he sprang from one head to the other of those about him, and raised clouds of dust as he played uninterruptedly with their powdered hair. As all paid court to this mischievous little beast in the hope of gaining a moment's notice from his master, this was regarded as delightful fun ; nay, as it was noticed that the monkey's fancy was attracted by hair dressed in a certain fashion, most of them conformed to it in the eager hope of attracting attention from the favourite's favourite. Having been powdered and perfumed, Plato Zubof was dressed, and then without a word to those around he re-entered the private apartments while they dispersed, many of them taking their way to their carriages drawn by four or six horses which blocked the street outside as they might the entrance to a theatre. A great number, it is stated, attended in this manner for three successive years without ever having had a word addressed to them by Zubof, and therefore without ever having been able to state their petitions or complaints to him. It is only in Russia, the strongest characteristics of whose people have ever been servility and avarice, that a scene so degrading to human nature could have been witnessed.

The woman who idolised this impertinent puppy was now past her sixtieth year and had grown

enormously stout. For all that "her gait, her demeanour, and the whole of her person were marked by dignity and grace," as we learn from the interesting Memoirs of Prince Adam Czartoryski, a Pole, who was obliged to attend the levées of Zubof in the hope of recovering his hereditary property which the Empress had confiscated. "None of her movements were quick, all in her were grave and noble," he adds, "but she was like a mountain stream which carries everything with it in its irresistible current. Her face already wrinkled but full of expression, showed haughtiness and the spirit of dominion. On her lips was a perpetual smile, but to those who remembered her actions, this studied calm hid the most violent passions and an inexorable will." Wrinkled and old as she was, there were among the young officers on duty at her Court, many who by using artifices to tighten their waists and expand their breasts, by smoothing their hair with pomatum, donning their best uniforms, and placing themselves in a line to attract her notice, were ready to rival and take the place of Plato Zubof.

The great charm of this coxcomb was his youth; for Catherine loved to be surrounded by young people and particularly by her grandchildren, who were educated under her immediate supervision, and who occupied a suite in whatever palace she resided. Of these her favourite was the eldest, Alexander,

whose character in its good humour, liberality, and general kindliness resembled her own, while at the same time his reserve, caution, want of ambition and self-confidence, were traits she did not possess. Her second grandson Constantine from his earliest childhood showed a savage disposition. Beginning by biting and kicking his teachers, he continued by caning his officers and striking his soldiers in the face with a violence that frequently knocked out their teeth. It may be added here that so brutal and cruel was his disposition, that when on the death of his brother Alexander without children, Constantine became heir to the throne, knowing the hatred in which he was held by the army, and dreading its consequences if he became Czar, he voluntarily resigned the crown to his younger brother Nicholas.

As the boys grew up Catherine permitted them to see more of their parents than they had done in their earlier years. Paul himself was not allowed a separate residence during the winter, he occupying a wing of the Imperial Palace, but in the summer and autumn he was allowed to take up his residence at Pavlofsky, or at Gatchina, which after the death of Gregory Orloff the Empress had purchased and presented to her son. At these country places the young princes frequently spent their days, always returning to their grandmother at night, and while there were attracted by the military display of the little army

with which their father was allowed to amuse himself by the Empress, who knowing his unpopularity, his cowardice, and the dislike in which his soldiers—derisively called the Prussians—were generally held, had no fear that all his drilling and marching and fighting of sham battles would lead to an insurrection. The name generally given to them was due to the fact that they were not only drilled after the Prussian fashion, but that Paul after infinite deliberation had devised for them a uniform which was a burlesque of that worn by the army of Frederick the Great. Not only the officers of Paul's regiments were obliged to wear this uniform at his levées and drawing-rooms, but also the officers of the Empress's regiments who desired to attend them. It therefore happened that many of the male courtiers were obliged to have two distinct uniforms into which they were continually changing.

Paul's aping of the ways of a country detested at this time by the Russians brought him into ridicule by the populace, and made him the butt of the guards, whom he hated because they had dethroned Peter. Foolishly showing his resentment to that powerful body, he used, as the severest censure he could imagine, to assure those of his own men who offended him that they were only fit to serve in the guards. Seeing that their father was despised by the Czarina, humiliated by the reigning favourite, laughed at by the courtiers,

and feared by all surrounding him, his sons naturally felt pity for him even while they shared the dread if not the dislike in which he was held; and when he desired to give them commissions in his little army they grasped at the idea with boyish delight, and were unceasing in their requests to their grandmother for the necessary permission, until she eventually granted it. They were therefore frequently in the field from early morning till sunset, laying siege to a ruined mill, defying invaders, demolishing enemies, and returned to their grandmother quite worn out, when they were obliged to change their ridiculous uniforms before presenting themselves before her. At the age of sixteen Constantine distinguished himself by striking a major, who had the courage to complain to the lad's governor who mentioned it to the Empress. On hearing of it she immediately ordered her grandson to be placed under arrest; an action which was repeated a little while later when she heard that he had spoken of her in the coarsest, most disrespectful language.

As Catherine had secretly resolved to settle the succession on her eldest grandson, she decided that he should marry early and establish himself and his family in the affections of her subjects during her own life. He had not therefore passed his fifteenth year before she began to make inquiries for a suitable wife for him. A confidential agent was accordingly

despatched to visit the courts of the German Princes who had pretty and marriageable daughters. This individual was to make careful reports, not only on the appearance and disposition of those he thought suitable to become Grand Duchesses, but on the moral characters and traits of their parents. When all Germany had been searched and particulars of the various princesses made known to Catherine, she sent for the two princesses of Baden-Dourlach to visit her Court on approval. This they willingly did, and as their mother was dead, came to St. Petersburg accompanied by their governess, Countess Schuvalof. After a long and tedious journey in terrible weather they reached the capital in a dilapidated condition one night in November 1792. On arriving at the Winter Palace they were immediately presented to the Empress, at whose feet they cast themselves, when she as far as her stoutness would permit, bent down and raised them. Then seeing their fatigued condition, she immediately ordered that they should be taken to the apartments prepared for them, where they supped alone.

Next morning her Majesty visited them to inspect their wardrobe, and this needing no replenishment, they were that day introduced to the young princes. Alexander at once thought that the eldest, the Princess Louisa, was pretty; but Constantine expressed his opinion that both were unattractive and should be sent back. In reality the Princess Louisa was handsome

and graceful, while the shyness of her manner added to its charm. The Empress who had been from the first attracted by her, eventually became much attached to her, and on Alexander after some weeks' acquaintance agreeing to marry the girl, was not only satisfied but delighted. The usual course followed. The bride-elect learned the Russian language, was instructed in the religion of the Orthodox Greek Church, publicly abjured her former faith, was baptized under the names of Elizabeth Alexievna, and on May 21st, 1793, was married to Alexander.

Two years later the Empress wishing to see her second grandson Constantine married before she died, set about finding him a wife. Once more a confidential agent—this time Baron Budberg, afterwards Minister of Foreign Affairs—was despatched to make a tour of inspection of the German princesses, and returned with flattering accounts of the three young Princesses of Saxe-Coburg. An invitation to them and their mother to visit the Court of St. Petersburg was gladly accepted. When these ladies arrived they were graciously received by the Empress, who replenished their wardrobes and then presented them to the Court. Fêtes, soirées, and balls were given for their entertainment, and to afford Constantine an opportunity of selecting one of them as his bride. Prince Adam Czartoryski, who was at the Court at the time, says that it was painful to see the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg who was a clever woman, and

her daughters who were pretty girls, anxiously watching to see which of them would be selected. There was something so disagreeable in this that the courtiers tried not to notice it, "especially as the Duchess and her daughters were in all other points very amiable and worthy respect. Various anecdotes about the Grand Duke Constantine were current which were far from confirming the hope that the match would be a happy one. These stories ought to have opened the eyes of the daughters and their mother, but perhaps they thought that as they had come from so far it was too late to go back, or maybe their eyes, fascinated by the splendour of greatness, did not see things in their right light."

The youngest of the three, the Princess Julia, a piquant little brunette with a store of wit, was eventually selected by Constantine in obedience to the orders of his grandmother rather than from personal inclination, for he liked none of the princesses. On entering the Greek Church she was given the names of Anna Feodorovna, and was married on April 17th, 1796. State dinners, balls, displays of fireworks, entertainments of various kinds followed which lasted for several weeks, but though splendid and noisy they were not joyous. "A sinister veil of sadness hovered over the ceremony and the fêtes which followed," says the authority just quoted. "It was a mournful spectacle, this handsome young Princess, come from so far to adopt a foreign

religion on a foreign soil, to be delivered up to the capricious will of a man who it was evident would never care for her happiness. These fatal presentiments were soon confirmed by the confidential avowals of the Grand Duke himself."

When these festivities had ended, and the Duchess of Saxe-Coburg and her two daughters had left St. Petersburg loaded with presents, the Court resumed its usual course. The Empress, her favourite, her grandsons and their wives, with a few intimate friends used at this time to play cards in the evening in the Salle des Diamants, so called because the Crown jewels were kept in the glass cupboards of that apartment. On these occasions it was noticed that Plato Zubof paid little attention to the game and less to the Sovereign, but turning his head to the table where the young Grand Dukes and Grand Duchesses played, staring at them fixedly and with a melancholy expression. That the Empress took no notice of what must have been as evident to her as to others was surprising; especially as she could not have remained ignorant of that which was no secret to others, that this pampered puppy professed to be in love with Alexander's wife, who was then just sixteen and who never showed a consciousness of his presence. Unaware that he made himself ridiculous, he pretended to feel the bitterest grief at this cruel treatment, and—generally after dinner—would neither speak nor smile, but

wearily flinging himself on a sofa, would sigh profoundly, pour scent on a handkerchief with which he mopped his forehead, and by a wave of his hand signify his wish to be soothed by the lascivious music of a lute, the faces of the creatures around him expressing the gravest sorrow and sympathy for his condition.

It was destined by fate that Zubof, the last of Catherine's favourites, should be instrumental in the ultimate downfall of one who in the days of her youth had been her ardent lover. The circumstances by which this was brought about were, that Zubof, not satisfied with the vast properties already presented to him by his Imperial and doting mistress, cast longing eyes upon Poland, and backed by ministers as greedy as himself for spoil, suggested to Catherine to make a further descent upon that unhappy country, a suggestion that falling in with her own wishes had not to be urged. As before, Prussia was anxious to aid and to profit by this unjustifiable robbery, by which Frederick William, who had succeeded his uncle Frederick the Great, proposed to take portions of Great and Little Poland, while Catherine desired to push the boundaries of Russia to the centre of Lithuania.

At this Poland rose, determined to defend all that was left of the country from the grasp of these spoilers. The King himself was believed to have abandoned

his servility to Russia, and to have overcome his characteristic indolence that he might join his subjects in their efforts to preserve their liberties. In a surprisingly short time an army of fifty thousand men was brought together, which might have overcome the designs of the enemy had it been united; but want of unity which had always been the curse of Poland, weakened its force, and though it offered heroic defence against the opposing armies of Russia and Prussia, led to its being almost annihilated. It was then that Catherine ordered Poniatowski to declare publicly and officially that it was necessary for the Polish army to yield to the superior forces of Russia and to seek peace; an order which as usual he was pusillanimous enough to obey. An Imperial manifesto was issued, on April 9th, 1793, proclaiming that her Majesty would incorporate within her dominions all the territory which her army had conquered in Poland; when the second partition of the nation took place in August of that year.

On the declaration of this humiliating peace, several patriotic officers in the Polish army resigned, chief among them being Thaddeus Kosciuszko, the descendant of an old Lithuanian family and a soldier whose bravery and skill were so prominent and serviceable, that during the late war he had at Dubrenka with merely four hundred men held an army of twenty thousand Russians at bay. The spoliation of

the country and the barbarity with which her people were treated by their conquerors made all patriotic Poles determined to make a desperate effort to free themselves from the yoke of Russia. In 1794 an insurrection was ready to break out, to direct and to lead which all eyes were turned to the heroic Thaddeus Kosciuszko, then at Leipsic. From there he was summoned by his countrymen and appointed generalissimo and dictator of the insurgents, whose army did not amount to five thousand men, a large number of whom were peasants armed only with scythes ; but all of whom burning with a sense of their bitter wrongs, and their cruel humiliations, were determined to conquer or to die.

The rebellion broke out on March 24th (1794), when Kosciuszko marched to meet the Russian army, whose numbers were nearly double those of his own, and who were advancing on Cracow. A desperate engagement followed which lasted four hours and resulted in victory for the Poles. At this joyful news the Poles in Warsaw gaining courage, rose against the Russian authorities and put seven thousand of them to death. After proclaiming a new government Kosciuszko followed up his success by pursuing the enemy, who retreated to the Prussian frontiers. Having but about fifteen thousand men left him, he vainly sought to gain recruits among the peasants, but they, ignorant, loving security, and satisfied with their

degradation, refused to join his forces ; while Poniatowski intimidated the nobles who had not already revolted, by assuring them that their opposition to Russia would prove disastrous to themselves.

The result of their efforts must have been foreseen by the insurgents, though this did not render them less resolved to strike a blow at the enemy, rather than tamely submit to degradation and wrong ; for while Russia was preparing to pour numbers of her troops into Poland, Frederick William at the head of an army of forty thousand men attacked the handful of Polish patriots. Never in the history of any nation was such gallantry shown, never were such sufferings borne as by them. While still struggling against the Prussians, and striving to prevent a meeting of two divisions of the Russian troops under Suivaroff and Fersen, the heroic Kosciuszko was attacked on October 4th at Macieyovitch, where, fighting desperately to the last and covered with wounds, he fell apparently lifeless amid a heap of his slain followers.

Those of them that escaped collected at Praga, a town not far from Warsaw, which they put into a state of defence. Here they were followed by Suivaroff, who had little trouble in taking it, and no compunction in putting to death in cold blood not only the remains of the insurgent army, but its twenty thousand inhabitants, irrespective of age or sex. Still

unsated by blood he marched on Warsaw, which was sacked with horrible cruelty. On hearing of his gallant deeds Catherine wrote him an autograph letter in which she said, "You know that I never advance any one out of rotation. I am incapable of doing an injury to a senior officer; but it is you who have made yourself Field-Marshal by the conquest of Poland." Though Kosciuszko's wounds were severe, they were not fatal, as was at first supposed. Carried from the field in an unconscious condition, he was attended by Russian surgeons, and when able to travel was sent to St. Petersburg, where he was imprisoned in the fortress of St. Peter and St. Paul. In the dungeons of the same fortress were detained such of his gallant officers as had been taken prisoners, who were treated with great severity. The kingdom of Poland was now at an end, all that remained of it being divided between Russia, Austria, and Prussia; its nominal sovereign was ordered to resign his crown, a command he uncomplainingly obeyed, his resignation being signed at Grodno on April 25th, 1795. The three Powers just mentioned agreed to pay his debts, which were considerable, and to allow him a pension which amounted to about three hundred thousand pounds per annum. Humiliated and despised, he passed the remaining years of Catherine's reign at Grodno under the surveillance of the haughty Prince Repnin, who had been made Governor-General

of Lithuania. The properties of the Polish nobles who had joined or sympathised with the insurgents were confiscated and divided among Catherine's greedy courtiers, the favourite and his brother Valerian being given large shares in the spoil. The latter who was an officer in the army, was supposed to have a direct claim to the booty, because during an engagement with the Polish insurgents he had lost a leg. Catherine's excessively tender heart was so distressed at hearing this, that she immediately dispatched her own surgeon to him. He, whom she declared a hero, was then made a lieutenant-general, given the Order of St. Andrew, and the sum of ten thousand pounds to defray the expenses of his cure, which he considering too small a sum, asked for fifty thousand pounds in addition. It was said that she also bestowed on him other favours which he was so unappreciative of as to value less than her roubles.

While engaged in crushing Poland, annexing the Crimea, and conquering the Turks, Catherine had her eyes steadily and greedily fixed on a neighbouring nation, gallant little Sweden, which she strove to humiliate and of which she would gladly have possessed herself. War indeed, in which she had failed to gain the victory, had been waged between Sweden and Russia, which was ended by the signing of a treaty of peace by Gustavus III. and Catherine at Varela on August 14th, 1790. Two years later, as the result of

a conspiracy of his nobles, Gustavus was shot in the back at a masquerade ball given at Stockholm. At the time of his death his son and successor was in his fourteenth year, but though nominally monarch, he was not, in accordance with his father's will, to exercise the powers of a sovereign until he had reached the age of eighteen, his uncle, the Duke of Sudermania acting as regent meanwhile.

This individual who was an ardent patriot, stern and unflinching in his duties, was hated by the Empress, not only for these qualities but because of the part he had played in the late war. To remove him from the regency, substitute ministers who would be her slaves, and make Sweden subservient to her power, became her aim. For this purpose intrigues were set on foot which among other things included an attempt on his life, an accusation that he had been instrumental in causing his brother's death, and an invitation to the young King to place himself under her protection. Her feelings towards the regent were returned by him, who dreading her hostility and her power, sought an alliance with France ; and knowing that she had set her heart on marrying her eldest granddaughter to the King his nephew, brought about an engagement between him and one of the Princesses of Mecklenburg. This action was so resented by the Czarina that when Count Schwerin was despatched to Russia to announce the

arrangement, she forbade him to appear at her Court.

Even in the lifetime of the late King of Sweden it had been the dream and desire of the Empress that his son should marry her eldest granddaughter, the Grand Duchess Alexandra. Nor had her intention been kept secret. A story is told that one day when the child was shown by her grandmother a portfolio containing portraits of the young princes of Western Europe, and was asked which she would like for a husband, she immediately pointed to Gustavus, a circumstance which Catherine, forgetting that the little Alexandra could read the name under the engraving, considered to point with the directness and certainty of fate to the accomplishment of her wishes. The fact was that the young Grand Duchess had already learned from those around her that she was to become the bride of the King of Sweden, whom they painted to her in all the charming colours of a fairy prince.

Since the death of Gustavus III., political reasons had made it still more desirable that this union should take place. That her political interests and her personal inclinations should be checkmated and disappointed by the engagement of the young King to a Princess of Mecklenburg was a move which Catherine was unwilling to tolerate. Her anger was roused, her resolution taken. Ostentatious preparations were

made by Russia for immediate war ; mysterious hints of severe vengeance to be taken on Sweden were dropped to the foreign Ministers ; and General Prince George Dolgoruky was dispatched to the frontiers of that country. At the same time more diplomatic methods of bringing about her desires were not neglected by the Empress, who sent Baron Budberg—who had selected Constantine's bride—to Stockholm as her ambassador. Eventually threats, cajoleries, promises, and money, induced the Regent to agree to abandon the proposed French alliance, to defer his nephew's marriage with the Princess of Mecklenburg until he came of age, and to consent to his visiting the Russian Court.

Satisfied with these concessions Catherine became amiable to the man she had described as a scoundrel and had accused of conniving at murder ; and wrote to him saying, "If when they see each other, the two children should prove mutually agreeable, we will consider the means of making them happy." The young King, travelling under the name of the Count von Haga, and the Regent under that of the Count von Wasa, together with the Prime Minister and their suite, arrived at St. Petersburg on August 25th, 1796, and were lodged at the residence of the Swedish Ambassador, M. Steding. Aware of what had happened, and expecting that the young monarch had come to win an Imperial bride, the citizens were eager

to see him, while at Court great preparations had been made for one whose coming had been the sole subject of conversation for weeks, during which time the courtiers by special command had learned and daily practised the French *contredanse*, which it was known was the favourite dance at the Court of Sweden.

On the day succeeding his arrival he, with his uncle and his suite, making a brilliant show in their national costumes which were the same as those worn in Spain in the previous century, were received in state at the Hermitage by her Majesty, who as she afterwards declared, had at first sight of Gustavus almost fallen in love with him herself. Tall for his seventeen years, his movements showing a natural dignity, on his face a winning smile, he slowly advanced to the double throne amply filled by a figure clad in cloth of gold, scintillating with precious stones, its head held upright, crowned and powdered, its cheeks heavily rouged, its jewel-like eyes fixed, watchful and magnetic. On drawing close to this august personage he bowed low and would have kissed her hand, but that she prevented him, saying, "No, I cannot forget that the Count von Haga is a King"; to which with wonderful tact he replied, "If your Majesty will not give me permission as an Empress, at least allow me as a lady to whom I owe so much respect and admiration."

The Empress then presented the various members of her family surrounding her, among whom was the

Grand Duchess Alexandra, who born on July 29th, 1783, had just entered her fourteenth year. Uncommonly tall and well developed for her age, she was extremely pretty, her complexion being transparently fair, her features regular, her hair light flaxen, her eyes blue, full of innocence, candour, and sweetness. The meeting of the young couple, conscious of their position to each other, and under the concentrated gaze of the courtiers, was full of embarrassment to both, and at this first interview not a word was exchanged between them. All the splendour and pomp of the Russian Court were now displayed; balls, concerts, fêtes, state dinners, were given not only in the Winter Palace, but in the Taurian Palace, where Catherine had been so superbly entertained by Patiomkin, and that she had bought after his death and used as an autumn residence. The great nobles also vied with each other in the magnificent entertainments they gave, in the vast sums they expended upon them, in the quantity of the jewels they wore. Added to this, great reviews were held where the might of Russia unrolled itself in countless glittering lines before the eyes of his Swedish Majesty.

Throughout all these entertainments he preserved the same simplicity of manner, graciousness of bearing, and ease, which sharply contrasted with the clumsy movements of the Grand Dukes, and especially the coarse

GUSTAVUS IV.,
King of Sweden.

buffooneries of Constantine, which frequently brought down on him the wrath of his grandmother. Gustavus who been carefully if somewhat narrowly educated, had from early youth shown a strength of mind which occasionally degenerated to the stubbornness of the weak, and a highly strung temperament that was later to develop certain eccentricities. But at this time he was alert, joyous, delighted by novelty, and eager to learn. For this purpose no matter how late he remained at fêtes, he was always up early in the morning, going about St. Petersburg on foot in company with his uncle or some members of his suite, bent on seeing everything, making pertinent inquiries, and passing free opinions. It was said that on his leaving the capital he knew far more of it than those who one day were to reign as its sovereigns.

Meantime, at the entertainments that quickly followed each other, he and the young Grand Duchess were given every opportunity to become acquainted. While they danced at balls, sat beside each other at concerts or plays, or walked under the shady trees of the great gardens of the palaces, the Empress's eyes were fixed on them watchfully, hopefully, her desire for their marriage increasing as she came to know, to esteem, and to like the young King. Her desire for the union was scarcely less great than that of the young girl's mother, the Grand Duchess Maria, who by the bond of this common hope was drawn into a closer intimacy

with the Czarina than she had ever known before. As for the Grand Duke Paul, he being indifferent if not averse to all that went on at his mother's Court, absented himself from it in order that he might harass his unhappy soldiers at Pavlofsky.

That the young couple had fallen in love with each other seemed plain to all, but though Gustavus had now been eight days continually in the company of Alexandra, he had given no expression to his feelings. How he did so on the evening of the ninth day was quickly and joyously communicated by Catherine to her old friend and correspondent Grimm. Speaking of a ball given by the Austrian Ambassador, she writes that it was very lively, "for there was a report that everything was definitely agreed to. I do not know whether it was for fun or not, but our young lover squeezed the hand of his intended in dancing with her. She turned as pale as death and told her governess: 'Just think what he did. He squeezed my hand as we were dancing. I did not know what was going to happen.' 'What did you do then?' 'I was so frightened I nearly dropped.'" On the following day Gustavus, waiving aside all ceremony, promptly asked the Empress's permission to marry her eldest granddaughter; a permission that was immediately given him. They were then informally engaged, and as lovers walked hand in hand, danced with each other, and talked in whispers lest an

unsympathetic world might overhear their mutual confidences and confessions.

All concerned in the promotion of the marriage were aware that one shadow lay on the brightness of the path leading to the altar, though it was generally believed that this would presently disappear. Reared as a strict follower of Luther, the King, who had in him the germs of that fanaticism which later led him to the lifelong conviction that Napoleon was the Great Beast spoken of in the Apocalypse, desired that Alexandra should before becoming his wife, abjure her religion in favour of his. A great deal of his Majesty's whispered conversations had been directed to religious subjects, and especially to persuading his hearer that truth was only to be found in the faith he professed, which he desired she should adopt. The young girl listened but made no promises. On his stating that his subjects would require her on the coronation day to receive the Sacrament after the Lutheran fashion, and asking if she would do so, she had replied, "Certainly, if grandmamma consents." On being brought before the Empress, the matter did not seem to present any difficulties, he readily agreeing that Alexandra should not be interfered with regarding her religion. On her Majesty saying she would require his signature to a written statement to that effect, the King had replied it was entirely superfluous.

Although his Prime Minister who had accompanied him, had stated to Count Arcadius Markoff that such an agreement could not be permitted, yet the latter, who was now chief minister under his patron Plato Zubof, did not deign to notice such a remark. Frivolous, lazy, proud, and self-sufficient, he dressed like a ridiculous marquis in a French comedy, walked on his toes, was vain of his wit, and exhibited a superciliousness that unfitted him for the high post he held. Seeing that Gustavus was enamoured of Alexandra, and believing that the Swedes dared not refuse any request made by the Russian Court, he had not troubled his head to discuss the conditions of the marriage, or to draw up the contract until the last moment when it was presented to the King for his signature.

Kept unaware of this and trusting to his statements that all would be well, the Empress fixed on the evening of September 11th (1796) for the public betrothal. The ceremony was to be conducted with all possible splendour. At seven o'clock the chief marshals and generals in the empire, their breasts covered with medals and orders; the ladies of the Court, each vying with the other in the magnificence of her appearance; the ministers and the Senate in their official robes; the ambassadors and great nobles; together with Tartar and Polish princes in their native costumes, had assembled in the vast hall of the Winter Palace, making a dazzling mass

of colour under the lustre of innumerable lights. A few minutes later they were joined by the Grand Duke Paul, small and insignificant beside the tall commanding figure of the Grand Duchess ; they being followed by his sons and their wives ; while later still came the Grand Duchess Alexandra, dressed as a bride and attended by her little sisters.

Then ensued a pause filled by the rustling of gowns, the jangling of spurs and swords, the whisperings of hundreds of voices, all of which suddenly ceased as the chevaliers-gardes, in their silver cuirasses and plumed casquets, flung open the doors of the private apartments to admit the entrance of the chamberlains, the great dignitaries of the household, the maids-of-honour, the ladies-in-waiting, the mistress of the robes, and finally the Empress, stout but still dignified, robed in a loose shimmering gown, walking slowly and feebly, a stick in one hand, the other laid on the arm of the favourite. On taking her seat upon the throne she looked round with pride upon the glittering throng that received her with bowed heads, then her eyes rested with delight and affection on the young Alexandra, whose timid air and heightened complexion made her look even prettier than usual. From her she gave a quick glance in search of the bridegroom elect, to find that the place allotted to him and his suite was empty. For a second a frown puckered her heavy eyebrows at his want of punctuality, but con-

sidering there must be sufficient reasons for it, her habitual smile returned to her heavily rouged face, and with a gesture she gave permission to all present to seat themselves.

Some minutes passed during which she chatted with those near her—Leon Narichkine, who sought to amuse her with subdued buffoonery, and Ivan Ivanovitch Schouvaloff the favourite of the Empress Elizabeth, whom Catherine had not only permitted to return to Russia, but had made her grand chamberlain. As ten minutes passed and the Swedish King had not made his appearance, his unpunctuality now seemed discourtesy. When twenty minutes had gone slowly by and he was still absent, it was vaguely feared that some unforeseen misadventure kept him away. As her Majesty, now growing uneasy, was about to send and make inquiries, the doors of the private apartments suddenly opened, and Count Markoff, no longer smiling, no longer tripping daintily on his toes, advanced hurriedly and whispered in her ear. The watchful eyes centred on her saw her gasp as if for air, and the next instant saw her swallow at a gulp a glass of water which Ivan Ivanovitch had brought her. Then recovering her habitual calm, she spoke with a serious air to Markoff who quickly disappeared and next moment she smiled reassuringly at her granddaughter, who pale from nervousness, looked towards her with questioning eyes.

It happened that at about half-past six that evening Count Markoff had gone to the residence of the Swedish Minister to present the marriage contract to the King and to obtain his signature. On reading it over the latter saw that it contained a clause guaranteeing to his future consort "entire liberty of conscience and of worship, according to the religion in which she had been born." To this he promptly and decisively refused to agree, much to the consternation of Markoff and the confusion of those around him. Surprised at this, and greatly fearing that he had mistaken the character of the young monarch, Markoff suddenly lost his haughty tone and became first conciliatory, then persuasive, but to all he urged or said the one reply was made: Gustavus would neither allow a chapel nor a priest of the Greek faith within his palace. On being reminded that it was now too late to draw back, that he had assured the Empress he would not interfere with the religion of the Grand Duchess, and that her Majesty and the whole Court awaited him, his answer was the same: he would not interfere with the conscience of the Princess, but he would not allow her a place of worship in his palace or his capital.

At that point Markoff had gone to the Empress to explain what had happened, and had received instructions to reason with the King and use all possible means short of submission to induce him to sign the

contract. Accompanied by some other ministers, Markoff had returned to find this obstinate boy still unyielding. To their persuasions and representations were joined those of his own Prime Minister and his suite, who believing his conduct would be resented by Catherine and involve their country in the horrors of war, begged him to accept the clause and become formally engaged to Alexandra. Their words were powerless to move him. His uncle the Regent, who had previously remained silent, then drew him on one side and in a low earnest voice reasoned and expostulated with him, but the only answer he received was, "No, I will not, I cannot, I will never sign it." Finally as if exasperated and unwilling to listen to further arguments opposing his will, he rushed into his bedroom and bolting the door refused to leave it, or speak to those who attempted to reason with him further.

When Markoff, crestfallen and not without fear, came before her Majesty for the second time that evening and told her of his failure to move the King, she for once forgetful of her dignity, raised her stick and struck him. The whole Court, which had been kept waiting in suspense no less than four hours, was in a state of confusion at this mark of her Majesty's wrath. As yet not knowing what had happened, all kinds of speculations had arisen in their minds, which were not reassured at hearing the state-

ment that the ceremony of betrothal had been postponed owing to the illness of the King. They were then hurriedly dismissed, while the Czarina, boiling with rage, bitterly humiliated, and suffering a distress greater, as she afterwards declared, than she had known on the eve of the revolution when her head was in danger, retired.

No sooner had the doors of the private apartments closed behind the Imperial family, and the restraint imposed by the watchful eyes of the Court been removed, than the Grand Duchess Alexandra, no longer able to endure the tension she had suffered, gave way to hysterics and wailed and wept like one for whom the happiness of life had ended. At that her mother flung her arms round the child and clasped her to her breast, while her father, silent and scowling, blew heavy breaths from his protruding under-lip to the tip of his flat nose, rolled his eyes, and made furious gestures with his arms, as was his habit when excited. The Empress, though almost dead from fatigue, suspense, and heat, made a supreme effort to control herself, and calling her granddaughter to her, assured her that what had happened was merely the result of a mistake which would be remedied next day ; hearing which, and believing that the sovereign will of the Czarina could not be thwarted or defied, Alexandra's cries subsided to sobs, and sick at heart over this her first grief, she was led away to her own apartments.

After a sleepless night the Empress rose feverish and unstrung. Her customary breakfast of several cups of very strong coffee helped to brace her for the task before her. To one of her almost omnipotent power, accustomed to servile obedience, it seemed inconceivable that her dearest wishes, the hopes of ten long years, should on the eve of fulfilment, be defeated by a boy who was in her power. She was resolved however to treat him with gentleness and to reason with him calmly. Accordingly when in the course of the morning he appeared before her in answer to her summons, she, controlling her indignation, received him with friendliness. The profession of one religion in preference to another could not have made any difference from a conscientious point to Catherine, who in her private correspondence stated that those who troubled themselves about such matters "were God-forsaken people"; but from a political point, out of respect to and fear of the opinions of her subjects, it was impossible that she could allow her granddaughter to profess a faith other than that in which she had been born. On his part Gustavus declared that his subjects would not tolerate a Queen who was a member of any other religion than their own. In answer to that he was assured that Russian troops would be placed at his disposal to quell such opposition as might be shown to such an arrangement; but in his eyes

that did not help to solve the difficulty, and the interview ended unsatisfactorily both to her Majesty and himself.

Arrangements had already been made to celebrate the birthday of one of the Grand Duchesses by a Court ball that evening. Though her attendence at this must have cost her a mighty effort, yet the Czarina was present, the eternal smile on her lips contrasting with the sombre anger that looked from her eyes. Gustavus and his suite also attended, but it must have been a relief to him to find that Alexandra was not among the Imperial party. Though he danced with the Grand Duchesses, and talked for a few moments with her Majesty, his constraint and embarrassment were evident, and seemed to communicate themselves to all present ; so that all were glad when he retired early and the ball—the apparent merriment of which could not hide the vexation and disappointment felt by the Court—came to an end.

Continued efforts were made to bring the lad to reason, not only by persuasion but by threats, for her Majesty's ministers hinted to him that his having allowed matters to proceed so far, only to break away at the last moment, was an insult not only to the Empress, but to the whole empire which must lead to a rupture between his country and Russia. To this he answered that he himself could not accede to the Empress's wishes, but that he would refer the subject

to the different Estates that would presently assemble at his coming of age, when if they consented to have a Queen who professed the Greek faith, he would send for the Grand Duchess Alexandra and make her his wife. Offended and angry at his obstinacy, some of Catherine's ministers reminded her that he was in her power and might remain there ; but in the face of Europe she did not dare to attempt to force him into compliance with her will, but let him depart in safety from her empire.

This evidence of his stubborn will, to carry out which he risked plunging his country into war, instead of pleasing his subjects as he had expected, gave them the first hint of what they might expect from such a ruler, who thirteen years later became so intolerable to them that they rose against, dethroned, and held him in captivity for some time. Subsequently, after the election of his uncle to the Crown, he was banished from his country, and under the name of Colonel Gustavson led a wandering life, which ended at St. Gall in 1837. He had eventually taken to wife the Princess Frederica of Baden, sister of the Grand Duchess Elizabeth, wife of Alexander, whom he made miserable by his fanaticism. It was said that the girl he was to have married never recovered the shock and disappointment resulting from his conduct. Having married the Archduke Joseph of Austria, Prince Palatine of Hungary, she died in giving birth to a child.

CHAPTER XV

Her Majesty's health—Her last evening at the Hermitage—Her sudden illness and its alarming consequences—Her death and Paul's succession—The first acts of his reign—The body of Peter III. is exhumed and watched over by his murderers and laid beside his wife—The Princess Daschkaw is banished—Her letter to the Czar and its consequences—The ex-King of Poland is summoned to St. Petersburg—He is treated kindly by Paul—His last days and his death—The Emperor visits and releases Thaddeus Kosciuszko and his fellow-prisoners—Rapid changes made by Paul—His war against round hats and his ridiculous orders—His capricious and eccentric conduct—His military ardour—Fears he is not treated with sufficient homage—Respect which the courtiers are ordered to exhibit to him—His dread of assassination—Its consequences to his subjects—Universal fear of the Imperial tyrant—He challenges the sovereigns of Europe—Evidences of his good-humour—A message from a madman.

THE failure of Catherine's scheme for making her granddaughter Queen of Sweden, the sight of the girl's acute sorrow, the bitter humiliation she herself had suffered, and her anger at Markoff for having until the last moment delayed the presentation of the marriage contract to Gustavus, together with the fatigue she had undergone during the late festivities, resulted in a slight stroke of apoplexy to the Empress. But having always great vitality she quickly recovered from this,

and though for some time past her increasing corpulency and the swelling of her legs had made her less active than formerly, yet she rose at her accustomed hour, transacted business, and carried on her daily occupations much as usual. There were moments when looking wearily back upon the lost joyousness of her youth, upon the strange events which had placed her on the throne and the tragic occurrences that had kept her there, she fell into profound sadness. But from these moods she roused herself, turning from threatening darkness to the light yet left to her, grasping at the interests of life that remained to her, and seeking amusements from her surroundings.

In this way she occupied herself in what may be called the last evening of her existence, when at one of her cosy little parties at the Hermitage her old friend and Court buffoon Leon Narichkine, dressing himself up as a pedlar, took from his pack a score of ridiculous things which he pressed her to buy. He too, full of years and of fears, clung to childish joys, his dread of death being so great that he never could bear to hear of the subject. Aware of this, the Empress, as we are told, "rallied him with great pleasantry" on the death of the King of Sardinia, news of which had just been brought to her. Either his terror or his buffooneries made her laugh so much that declaring it had brought about a slight colic, she retired early. Next morning she was up at her usual

hour, drank her black coffee, sent for the favourite and talked to him for some time, and then began the work of the day with her secretaries. Before she had finished with the last of these she asked him to wait her further instructions in the anteroom. As he did so for some thirty minutes without being summoned, her Majesty's valet in attendance grew uneasy, and opening the door looked in, to see she was not there. Still more alarmed, he then opened the door of a passage leading to her bedroom, when he saw her lying on the floor with all the dread appearances of one stricken with apoplexy.

In a moment he had summoned the favourite and the doctors, who carrying her into her bedroom laid her on a mattress on the floor near an open window. Frequent bathing and constant bleeding were the remedies tried to restore her to consciousness. For a moment these seemed to succeed, for opening her eyes and seeing Plato Zubof bending over her, she put her hand upon her heart and moaned as if in pain, then relapsing into unconsciousness she remained in that condition for three days, at the end of which she died. From the instant when her serious condition became known the whole Court was in a state of the uttermost confusion. Plato Zubof, discarding his languid airs, alert, anxious, his hair dishevelled, spent most of the time during the first day of her illness in tearing and burning papers which he feared would

bring him into trouble with the succeeding sovereign ; doctors and attendants rushed backwards and forwards ; state officials and courtiers came and went, consternation and anxiety filling one and all of them.

When towards the evening of that first day the medical men declared that her Majesty could not recover, Plato Zubof despatched his brother Nicholas to the Grand Duke Paul, then at Gatchina, to announce the news to him. As quick as possible Paul arrived in St. Petersburg, and entering the room where his mother lay still living but on the threshold of death, he viewed her silently with rolling eyes and noisy breathings. That her reign was over there could be no doubt, though whether his was about to begin was uncertain ; for he was well aware that it had been her intention to exclude him from the throne in favour of his eldest son. The sight of his dark furtive face, the reputation of his eccentricities, his capriciousness, his cruelties, made him dreaded, and when he expressed a desire to examine his mother's private papers, her chief secretary and confidant Besborodko unlocked drawers and desks which enabled him to do so. It has been stated that among them he came upon a sealed package which bore the inscription "To be opened in the Council after my death.—Catherine," which he destroyed. There was still the possibility that if she recovered consciousness and speech she would declare Alexander her successor ;

THE GRAND DUKE PAUL
Afterwards Emperor Paul I.

and while she yet breathed her son wandered restlessly from his own apartments in the palace to hers, his figure wherever it appeared striking terror in those who shrank from his approach. There was no cause however for such fears as he may have felt, for the Empress died without uttering the dreaded words, on November 9th, 1796, in the sixty-eighth year of her age. During that time she had given to her favourites properties, jewels, and wealth, which are estimated to have cost Russia not less than twenty million pounds.

On the morning of Paul's accession all St. Petersburg was in a state of alarm and suspense, not knowing what might happen. He himself became immediately active. Orders were given that no person should be allowed to quit the city, so that even the couriers of the foreign ministers were not permitted to pass the gates. His little army from Gatchina with the two Grand Dukes at their head marched into the capital as if about to invade it, and drew up in battle array in the square of the Winter Palace, where the populace had an opportunity of seeing soldiers in uniforms unlike any they had seen before, and who a few hours later were quartered upon them—sralwart and thirsty men whose ideas of the hospitality due to them was such that by nightfall they and their high-pointed Prussian hats were rolling about the streets or lying in the mud. As soon as possible these men, on whose loyalty Paul relied, were distributed

among the four regiments of guards, who with a proud reputation for making and unmaking sovereigns, considered themselves a privileged body. Not only that, but the officers of his Majesty's little troops were promoted and placed above the haughty and aristocratic officers of the guards, who were obliged either to retire or to obey the orders of a set of ill-bred braggarts who, as might be expected, delighted to exercise their authority over their betters.

This was but the first step taken by the new Czar towards avenging the dethronement and murder of Peter III., to whose memory he desired to pay all possible respect ; partly out of opposition to the acts of his mother, and partly by way of asserting his claims of filial relationship to one who had he lived would have disowned Paul as his son. In support of these ideas he who for years had been secretly and silently brooding over what he should do in case he came to the Crown, and who as the result of such long premeditation was now ready to act with promptitude, on the day of Catherine's death gave orders that the remains of her husband should be exhumed from the obscure grave in which they had rested for over thirty-four years in the monastery of St. Alexander Nevsky. As many monks had come and gone since the date of that tragedy, and as the resting-place of Peter had never been a spot to which respect or attention had been paid, none at first could tell where

the dethroned Czar had been buried ; but eventually an old monk was able to recall the site. Therefore the bones of the unhappy wretch, which had lain unhonoured all these years, were now brought to light with much ceremony and in the presence of Paul, deposited in a splendid coffin, carried in state to the Winter Palace, and placed on a bier beside the embalmed remains of the late Empress in her apartments, to a sight of which the public were admitted.

Night and day for six long weeks the high officials and ladies of the Court, irrespective of the visits of nobles, citizens, and soldiers, were obliged to watch in this lugubrious chamber, entirely hung with black and lighted only by the candles round the catafalque. Twice a day, always at the same hour, the Emperor at the head of the whole Imperial family visited the remains, when he had not only an opportunity of paying his respects to them, but the satisfaction of feasting his eyes upon two noticeable figures present. Knowing that three of those concerned in the death of Peter still lived—Alexis Orloff ; Passik, who had been aide-de-camp to the late Empress ; and Prince Baratinsky, who had been her Court Marshal—the Czar commanded them to watch over the bones of the man they had murdered. Before this order could reach him Passik disappeared, but Baratinsky, though half dead with fright, was obliged to obey, as was also Alexis Orloff, who bore himself during the ordeal with a firmness

that bordered on indifference. At the end of six weeks these two were also compelled to follow the coffins of Peter and Catherine, to whom a military funeral was given ; all the troops in the garrison of St. Petersburg and the neighbourhood attending, while the whole Court was obliged to go on foot from the Winter Palace to the Nevsky monastery at the other end of the capital, so that the ceremony occupied a whole day and ended by placing in the same vault the bodies of those who in life had been unfaithful to and hated each other. That the remains of Peter were not deposited among the tombs of the Emperors in the vaults of the fortress chapel, was owing to the fact that he was not considered entitled to that honour, as he had never been crowned. As Catherine had been, and was therefore eligible, she would have been placed there had not her son considered it his duty to lay her beside her husband.

All now awaited to see what heavy punishment the Czar would inflict on Alexis Orloff and Prince Baratinsky, and many were surprised that it was limited to banishment for ever from the Court in the case of the latter, and to banishment from the empire in that of Alexis Orloff. There was another individual closely connected with the dethronement of Peter to whom the Emperor now turned his attention. This was the indefatigable Princess Daschkaw, who in the latter years of Catherine's life had been again

admitted to her favour, and whom she had made Director of the Academy of Arts and Sciences, the foundation of which was due to a suggestion of the Princess. This post was not only taken from her, but she was peremptorily ordered to take up her residence on one of her son's estates situated in the northern part of the government of Novgorod, where, it was added, she would have ample time to reflect on the events of 1762, while awaiting the further pleasure of his Majesty.

Living here in a peasant's hut sparsely furnished, surrounded by frozen morasses and dreary forests, in a northern latitude of sixty degrees, shut off from all communication with the world, yet near enough to the high road to see daily, companies of poor wretches take their melancholy way to Siberia in compliance with the wishes of the Czar, the Princess, no longer young and suffering from a serious ailment, found life intolerable. Her spirit was, however, still strong and energetic, and summoning all her courage she wrote a letter to the Emperor in which she "rather in a disdainful than in a supplicating tone" spoke of the precarious condition of her health and asked permission to be allowed to live on her estate at Troitskoe, where lodged in her own house, she might be within reach of medical aid. She asked this boon because neither religion nor humanity would allow her to see without concern, and without making

an effort to relieve them, the hardships of those who voluntarily shared the sufferings of one who was unconscious of her crime, and who during the lifetime of his mother had never spoken against him. This was enclosed in a letter to the Empress, whose intercession in her behalf was requested. The sequel is told by the Princess Daschkaw. "When," she says, "the Empress presented to the Emperor the letter addressed to him, he fell into the most inconceivable fury, and driving her from his presence, swore that he never would be dethroned as his father had been, nor would he receive a letter from me. In the height of his rage he sent off a courier with orders that I should be deprived of pens, ink, and paper, and kept so strictly watched as to be debarred from all communication and correspondence whatever except with those immediately about me."

The Empress, driven from him, went to Mademoiselle Nelidoff, her maid of honour, who passed for Paul's mistress, but whose relations with the Emperor were according to a member of the Court, Prince Adam Czartoryski, merely platonic, which accounted for the understanding and friendship which existed between the two women. On consulting with Mademoiselle Nelidoff, it was arranged that the Princess's letter should be placed in the baby hands of the little Grand Duke Michael, who was then to be led into the august presence of his father with directions

to hand him the missive. This being done the Emperor took the letter and read it, when in one of those moods of reaction to which he was subject after an outburst of anger, he embraced the child, and turning to the Empress and her friend said, "Ah, you ladies know how to plead irresistibly." While he was still in a good humour they begged he would grant the unhappy woman's request, when taking up a pen he immediately wrote: "Princess. As you are desirous of returning to your estate in the government of Kalouga, you are at liberty to do so. I remain your well-wisher and very affectionate Paul." A courier was then despatched without a moment's delay to overtake the former one, who carried a very different message, and this being done the joyful news was conveyed to the Princess.

The bitterness of Paul's hate and revenge is illustrated by the fact that by his orders the mausoleum placed in the church of Kherson above the remains of Patiomkin was ruthlessly smashed, while the remains themselves were disinterred, desecrated, and scattered on the roadway, so that the memory might be erased of the man who had neglected and humiliated him. Paul felt very differently disposed to another of his mother's favourites, Poniatowski, who when his Majesty was merely a Grand Duke and had passed through Poland on his tour through Western Europe, had graciously received and

fêted him. The humbled monarch was therefore immediately after Paul's accession invited to leave Grodno, where he was virtually a prisoner, and to take up his residence at St. Petersburg, where on his arrival he was received with all the honours due to a sovereign, being met as he approached the capital by high dignitaries of the Court, who on behalf of the Czar bade him welcome, and conducted him to the Marble Palace which, magnificently furnished, was given him as a residence.

When on the day of his arrival Poniatowski waited on his Majesty, he was graciously received, and Paul assured him that had he been on the throne he would not have consented to the partition of Poland. He regretted that so unjust and cruel an action had been done, adding however that no matter how unjustifiable it had been, it was now too late to rectify it. Charmed like all who approached him by the grace of Poniatowski's manner, both he and the Empress delighted in his company, and entertained him at public banquets and at private receptions. In return the dethroned King, whose pension enabled him to live in regal style, and who had his chamberlains, his suite of attendants, and his famous *maître d'hôtel* who had remained in his service since his regal days, entertained the Czar and the Imperial family, who continually dined and supped with him. It was while preparing a soirée for them, which was to include

private theatricals, that Poniatowski was attacked by an apoplectic stroke for which the customary remedy of bleeding was at once applied by his physician-in-waiting, Dr. Bekler. News of his serious illness brought many friends to the Marble Palace, among them the Emperor and the Imperial family, who showed much sympathy with one who had known so many strange vicissitudes, to the end of which he had now come; for though he recovered consciousness it was evident that he had but a few hours to live. His chaplain therefore heard his confession and administered extreme unction to him, shortly after which he died on the morning of February 12th, 1798. A solemn requiem Mass was sung for the repose of his soul in the Dominican Church of St. Petersburg, after which he was interred in its vaults.

To others connected with the downfall of Poland the Czar was equally humane; for on the day when he had summoned Stanislaus Augustus Poniatowski to the capital, he went to the fortress to visit Thaddeus Kosciuszko, who still suffered severely from his wounds and was deeply depressed because he had survived the destruction of his country. Strange as it may seem, the man who benefited by such destruction sympathised with the patriot's feelings, and made the same statement to him which he afterwards repeated to Poniatowski, that he disapproved of the plundering of Poland, but that it was now too late to make reparation

or do justice to that unhappy country. His visit was repeated not only by himself but by the Grand Dukes to Kosciuszko, whom he liberated and permitted to leave Russia, after first forcing on him money sufficient to secure his independence for life. This Kosciuszko thought it wisest to accept for the present, so that he might seem to comply with his Majesty's wishes ; but soon after he had reached America, the amount was returned with a letter expressing his gratitude. At his request the other prisoners who had fought for Poland were, after taking an oath of allegiance to Paul, and obtaining bail from friends who at their own risk guaranteed that these unhappy men would not enter on any enterprise prejudicial to Russia, also liberated, and dispersed in different directions. Before visiting America Thaddeus Kosciuszko stayed for a short time in England. In 1798 he left America and arriving in France took up his residence at Fontainebleau. In 1815, after the fall of Napoleon, he left Fontainebleau for Switzerland, where he cultivated farming, and two years later in October 1817, died there from injuries he had received from a fall from his horse.

On the death of Catherine, the favourite, Plato Zubof, now a dethroned monarch in whose distracted face his former sycophants laughed derisively, became an abject creature who dreaded lest Paul—whom he had always disliked and of whom he had shown his

contempt—might strip him of his wealth and estates, and banish him for the remainder of his days to Siberia. Leaving the Winter Palace where he knew his presence must prove disagreeable to the new sovereign, he on the plea of illness took refuge in the house of his sister, a lady married to Jerbtsof, chamberlain to her late Majesty, whose disposition was so charitable that it was said of her she "often failed in an assignation with a lover to go and relieve the distressed." Under her roof Plato Zubof awaited his fate, which was not long in overtaking him, though its decrees were unexpectedly gentle. The Grand Duke Constantine, who but a little while ago had offered him servile flattery, now "with all the rudeness which was natural to him," ordered Plato to resign the thirty-four offices he nominally held, and within twenty-four hours to leave the capital and take up his residence on his estates in Lithuania, to gain which it may be mentioned, had been the principal cause of the last partition of Poland. All the officers of his staff and of his suite, who numbered no less than two hundred, were obliged to join their respective corps or give in their resignation; his secretaries were banished; and many of the creatures whose chief office was to flatter and to fawn on him were exiled or imprisoned. His wealth was left to him, as were his wonderful jewels, which he had an opportunity of exhibiting to the eyes of Western Europe when a little while later he was

commanded to leave Russia. On the other hand, his brother Nicholas, who had brought the glad tidings to Paul of his mother's fatal illness, was appointed Grand Equerry to the Emperor and received from him the Order of St. Andrew. Markoff, who had been Catherine's trusted secretary and a protégé of Plato Zubof, was banished to Siberia ; while Besborodko, whom she had recently slighted and who had been obliging enough to place her private papers before Paul for his examination, was appointed his Prime Minister, made a prince, and though already rich, given grants of land and great sums of money.

From the day of Paul's accession, rapid and radical changes took place in the palace and in the capital, many of which were ridiculous, none of them useful, but all of which were ordered with the utmost gravity. The burlesque uniforms of the Prussian soldiers, already worn by the troops at Gatchina and Pavlofsky, were now introduced into the whole Russian army. Collars which had been worn so high as to cover the chin were now set aside in favour of those which allowed the neck to be seen. It was also ordered that the hair should be worn flat and long behind, with two stiff curls above the ears and a pigtail hanging behind, all of which should be powdered and pomatumed ; and on its becoming known that French officers wore large whiskers, an Imperial order was issued that every man at Court should instantly shave his. But above a

his Majesty was extremely particular as to the kind of headgear which should be worn by his subjects or by those who visited his country. Detesting round hats, which he considered as the outward sign of republicanism, a special ukase was issued to forbid their being worn, when the English Ambassador, Sir Charles Whitworth, to avoid offending the Emperor was obliged to have a hat with a three-cornered brim made for his wear. The son of an English merchant who was not disposed to humour the whims of the Czar, and who desired to puzzle the police, who had strict orders to arrest those who wore the offensive headgear, appeared in the streets of St. Petersburg wearing an English hunting cap. At sight of it the police were mystified and were uncertain how to act. In reporting the matter to the Emperor they said it was not a round hat neither was it a cocked hat. After much grave deliberation his Majesty decided to prohibit an article of wear which he did not know how to describe, a difficulty he got over by forbidding "any person to appear in public with the thing on his head worn by the merchant's son."

Those who were forgetful of his Majesty's wishes in this respect had their round hats torn from their heads as they drove in their carriages or sledges by the soldiers or police ; an action which was followed, when the wearers belonged to the humbler classes, by a sound flogging. Sir Charles Whitworth had frequently to

protest to the Emperor against the outrages committed on harmless British subjects by the police ; while the Sardinian Minister, for having spoken jestingly of his Majesty's war against round hats, was ordered to quit the capital within twenty-four hours.

A special ukase was also issued forbidding boots to be worn with coloured tops, and the police were ordered to see that no man went abroad in such offensive articles. Their methods were summary, as we learn from an incident mentioned in the travels of Edward Clarke, who says that when a foreigner driving through St. Petersburg was stopped by them and ordered to cut off the tops of his boots, he protested, saying they were the only pair he had, on which they, each seizing a leg as he sat in his drosky, pulled off his boots and left him to go barefooted to his hotel. Ukases were also issued forbidding the wearing of frock coats, of waistcoats without sleeves, and of pantaloons. Scientific men, teachers, and others were warned not to use the word "revolution," in describing the course of the stars ; players were to substitute the word "permission" for "liberty" in their bills and in their dialogue, and tradesmen were ordered to efface the word *magazin* from their establishments and substitute the Russian word for "shop" instead. It was also the Imperial wish that all horses should be harnessed after the Prussian rather than the Russian fashion. A fortnight was given to effect the change

after which time the police had instructions to cut the traces of all conveyances whose horses were harnessed after the national fashion.

All drivers, whether of public droskies or private carriages, were ordered to wear a false tail of hair until their own grew sufficiently long to be plaited, and to make other changes in their costumes. Edward Clarke states that a servant was taken out of his sledge and caned in the streets for having too thick a neckcloth ; and adds that after every precaution had been taken to obey the Imperial commands, yet "the dress when put on never satisfied the police or the Emperor ; either the hat was not straight on the head, or the hair was too short, or the coat was not cut square enough. A lady at Court wore her hair rather lower in the neck than was consistent with the ukase, and she was ordered into close confinement and to be fed on bread and water. A gentleman's hair fell a little over his forehead while dancing at a ball ; upon which a police officer attacked him with rudeness and with abuse, and told him if he did not instantly cut his hair, he would find a soldier who could shave his head, a mode by which criminals are punished in Russia."

From the capricious and eccentric conduct of the Czar no man was safe, and terror rapidly spread through the capital as fresh instances of it daily came to light. One day on seeing the sledge of Count

Razumovsky standing in the street without servants who had gone into a neighbouring shop, his Majesty instantly ordered it to be smashed into small pieces, and not only that, but as it was painted blue and the servants' liveries were red, his Majesty issued a ukase forbidding throughout the Empire of All the Russias, sledges or carriages to be painted blue, or servants to wear red liveries. On another occasion seeing one of his nobles standing in the street looking at workmen planting trees, the Emperor rushing up to him asked what he was doing there, and on being told that he was merely a spectator, his Majesty ordered him to take off his coat and work with those he watched. In the same spirit, on meeting an officer on his way to parade, whose sword was being carried by his servant, the Czar instantly degraded the officer to the rank of a private, and made his servant an officer. A worse fate attended another officer who had dared to make an epigram comparing Paul's reign with that of his mother, for which the unhappy man had his tongue cut out, and was banished to the most desolate part of Siberia.

From the date when he became Emperor, every day that he was in the capital, no matter how severe the weather, he drilled his soldiers in the courtyard of the palace, a labour usually followed by a parade or a review. Here, his two eldest sons in attendance, attentively watching and secretly fearing him, he

taught the men to mount guard, to salute or to march according to what he conceived to be the Prussian fashion. Nothing seemed at such times to give him greater pleasure than to get hold of some wretched recruit whom he turned from left to right, whose chin he raised, whose belt he tightened, whose buttons he counted, and whose cap he placed at the proper angle of his head. While occupied for hours in this way all were forbidden to speak to him, and none dare approach him under penalty of arrest and punishment. His instructions to the soldiers were usually enforced by blows from his cane, while occasionally one or more of them were singled out for the heavier punishment of a flogging for some trifling inattention or sign of stupidity. One of these poor wretches while writhing under the knout cried out, "Oh, cursed bald-head," words which proved his death-knell, for overhearing them the Czar commanded that he should be flogged to death.

These drills and parades, which there was no escaping, were the terror of the officers who, pay what attention they would to a thousand little details required of them by this Imperial martinet, were frequently struck by his cane, sworn at, had insulting messages sent them by his aides-de-camp, and were degraded in their rank. The whole business of the empire was lost sight of in the absorbing pursuit of teaching the Prussian drill, or in considering the shape of a hat,

the colour of a feather, the height of a grenadier's cap, the size of his boots, cockades, queues, sword belts, or spatterdashes, samples and drawings of which were scattered all over his Majesty's apartments.

From the beginning he was harassed by two fixed ideas that accounted for some of his extraordinary acts ; the first being that he should be dethroned, the second that he was not treated with sufficient homage. After being neglected and slighted for some forty years, he now resolved that he should be regarded with profound reverence. The Grand Master of Ceremonies was therefore directed to instruct and to drill and to rehearse the courtiers in the way they should behave to their Sovereign. On entering his presence they were to bow to the earth, and then to go down on one knee, making its impact with the floor an evidence of their earnest reverence, after which they were to kiss audibly his extended hand, and worse if possible, men and women alike, to receive the kiss given them on the cheek by this miserable little man, whom his courtiers likened to a pug dog, and who, realising that he was ugly, would not have his effigy on his coinage, his cypher being substituted instead. Having received his salute they were at liberty to rise, but on no condition or occasion, even when they danced, were they to turn their backs on him. For having kissed his Majesty's hand without showing an appearance of joy and appreciation

of that honour, Prince George Gallitzin was placed under arrest.

It was also commanded that when those driving in sledges or carriages met the Czar, their conveyances were to be immediately pulled up, while the coachman and footman uncovered, and the occupants descended, no matter whether the streets were covered with snow or slush, and make a profound bow. This was accordingly done, frightened and trembling women and children hurriedly courtesying while the Emperor looked on critically to judge if they were sufficiently respectful. In his gracious desire to give his nobles an opportunity of publicly paying him their homage in this way, it was his Majesty's habit to drive or ride through the capital daily ; when it became the object of one and all to avoid him ; so that at the sight of him in the distance people turned back, hurried down side streets, or took refuge in doorways. Those who through the negligence of their coachman, or their own absent-mindedness, allowed the Czar to pass without jumping from their carriages and bowing to the earth, were arrested, insulted, and at times banished from St. Petersburg. A person scarcely less terrible, or less tyrannical, was General Araktcheyeff, Grand Master of Police, who also drove through the city to see, not only that the Emperor's orders, but his own were carried out to the letter. One of his commands was that no sledge should be driven at a rapid pace, dis-

obedience to which entailed the flogging of the coachman, and the appropriation of the sledge for as long as he desired to keep it, by this arbitrary official.

Knowing how detestable he had made himself, the Czar's greatest, most abiding dread was of assassination ; and there was scarce a man or woman around him whom he did not suspect of being in a conspiracy against him. First and foremost of those he feared was his wife whose vanity, "Gothic haughtiness," and ambition led him to imagine that she desired to play the part of Catherine over again, for which indeed she had neither the cleverness nor the magnetic fascination of her late Majesty. However, as she had changed her lover, her religion, and her country to become a Grand Duchess, Paul was justified in thinking that he might be included in the sacrifices she was further prepared to make in the hope of succeeding him. The fact of her being seen in conversation with any man, the suspicion that she was interested in any individual, was sufficient to cause his instant dismissal and banishment from Court.

Although his eldest son Alexander paid his father all the respect which fear could impose and though the latter knew that his heir was without ambition, and of all things desired a retired, peaceful, irresponsible existence, yet he also fell under the dark doubts of the Czar. As for those who had been in favour with Catherine, who had served her as ministers,

secretaries, members of her household, or military officials, they were with scarce an exception dismissed and persecuted. As a consequence the business of the State was thrown into a state of hopeless confusion, which if possible was increased by the incompetency of those who replaced them, whose chief merits were that they had been favoured by Peter III., or had been employed by Paul at Gatchina. But these were not to be envied. Placing implicit confidence in them at first and treating them with familiarity, he in a day or a week regretted his frankness and trust, which he became convinced would be used against him, and therefore regarded them as dangerous characters to be deprived of all opportunity of injuring him; they were without the slightest evidence against them turned out of their offices, banished from the Court, or sent to Siberia according to the whim of this maniac. Occasionally a single word which he could twist into a covert threat, or a conversation held by two or three persons, was sufficient to rouse his suspicions of their evil intentions to himself, and to result in their imprisonment or torture, for Paul had revived the State Inquisition.

Prince Adam Czartoryski tells us that "the balls and Court festivities were arenas where each man risked his position and his liberty. The Emperor's fancies and his decisions were equally sudden and were at once carried out. Other sovereigns after a fit of anger

or extreme rigour sometimes become calm and strive to soften the effects of their first decisions. This was not the case with the Emperor Paul. Usually after giving a severe order with regard to a man who had displeased him, the punishment did not after reflection seem to him sufficient, and he often augmented it. All who belonged to the Court or came before the Emperor were thus in a state of continual fear. No one was sure that he would remain in his place at the end of the day, and in going to bed it was quite uncertain whether during the night or in the early morning some policeman would not come with a kibitka to drive you off at once to Siberia."

This terror was extended to the military, a hundred officers being in one day discharged, ruined, and imprisoned, for no better reason than the ill-humour of Paul with his mistress, who detested him. News of arrests and exiles became the daily conversation of this reign of terror, and there was not a noble family who had not one or more members sent to the fortress or to Siberia for faults of which they had no knowledge and of which they dared not ask. Edward Clarke adds his testimony to that already given concerning Paul's reign. In speaking of the gloom that was spread over the capital by the madness and malevolence of a suspicious tyrant, he says, "Hardly a day passed without unjust punishment. It seemed as if half the nobles in the empire were to

be sent to Siberia. Those who were able to leave St. Petersburg went to Moscow. It was in vain they applied for permission to leave the country: the very request might incur banishment to the mines. If any family received visitors in the evening; if four people were seen walking together; if any one spoke too loud, or whistled, or sang, or looked too inquisitive and examined any public building with too much attention; he was in imminent danger. If he stood still in the streets, or frequented any particular walk more than another, or walked too fast or too slow, he was liable to be reprimanded and insulted by the police officers. If foreigners ventured to notice any one of these enormities in their letters, which were all opened and read by the police, or expressed themselves with energy in praise of their country, or used a single sentiment or expression offensive or incomprehensible to the police officers or their spies, they were liable to be torn in an instant without any previous notice from their families and friends, thrown into a sledge and hurried to the frontier or to Siberia. Many persons were said to have been privately murdered and more were banished."

Nothing gratified more the small soul of this man, so long used to subjection and humiliation, than to inspire all around him with terror, and to exercise his power in the most arbitrary manner. Nominations and dismissals from public offices followed each other so

rapidly that scarce had the *Gazette* announced the appointment of a man than it published his discharge, which was often followed by his banishment. Those who had public business to transact were bewildered as to whom they should address themselves. Paul's desire to strike fear into all led him—whom the Princess Daschkaw describes as "a suspicious poltroon," and who was naturally so timid that when on his parades and reviews he was in front of cavalry he never would permit them to charge—to the ridiculous act of publishing a challenge to any sovereign who differed from his political opinions to settle the difference by single-handed combat. This was especially addressed to the King of Prussia, who had declined to join the coalition of Russia, Turkey, Austria, and Naples against the all-dreaded Napoleon.

There were odd times when by a sudden change the Czar exhibited symptoms of what was declared to be—not insanity—but good-humour. On such occasions, when he was certain to talk with indecency and folly, he flung his legs and feet about in an uncouth way, and put out his tongue at those to whom he wished to show a special mark of his favour. When in such a mood one day his Imperial Majesty ordered Prince Constantine Czartoryski, who with his brother Adam was in the Emperor's service, to make a coarse and insulting remark to one of the courtiers, and when the Prince refused the Czar "repeated his order with

such a menacing air" that the young man considered himself obliged to obey. On the same individual being sent at another time to assure an officer that he was an arrant fool, the recipient of the message declared it had not the slightest effect on him "as it came from a madman."

CHAPTER XVI

The Emperor Paul is crowned at Moscow—He builds himself a fortified palace for his security—A rumour that enrages him—He quarrels with his wife and his mistress—Count Rostopchin's scheme—The reign of terror at the Court of St. Petersburg—The beginning of a conspiracy—Initiating the Grand Duke Alexander into its purpose—He is brought to approve of his father's dethronement—The Czar's suspicions and Count Pahlen's answer—Plato Zubof's supper to the conspirators—How they entered the Palace of St. Michael—A valet causes an alarm—His Imperial Majesty is found hidden behind a curtain—His abject terror—He prepares to sign his abdication—His strangulation and subsequent treatment—Alexander waits to hear news of the Czar's abdication—His horror on hearing of his father's death—His mother desires to become sovereign—Her ambition is laughed at—The fate of the conspirators.

THE arbitrary, capricious, and cruel manner in which Paul exercised his unlimited power at first paralysed the energies of those who hated him, suffered under him, and desired to see him dethroned. In place of effecting that action of which at this time they dared not whisper to each other, they were obliged in the spring of 1797 to accompany him to Moscow to assist at his coronation. For this and all the other

ceremonies and Court functions in connection with it, dress rehearsals took place, so that all might know the exact number of obeisances they were to make, and the positions in which they were to stand; while the Czar himself, as active and busy as a stage manager, and with his cane ready to strike, looked after the whole scene even to the minutest detail of costume or decoration. The coronation took place in the Kremlin with all the splendour and display dear to the soul of this little man, who to counteract his diminutiveness held his head high, a habit learnt from his mother. But not all the gorgeous splendour of which he was the centre could hide from him the fact that he was dreaded by his wife and children, and hated by the nobles who kissing his hand on bended knees, paid him slavish homage.

Fêtes, banquets, parades, and reviews followed each other, none of which seemed to give any satisfaction to the Emperor or his guests. When these had ended and the Imperial family had returned to St. Petersburg, surrounded by the nobles who were not to be lost sight of and by troops of soldiers, the Czar's first action was, notwithstanding the numerous palaces he already possessed, to build himself from his own designs an immense habitation, which with its high surrounding walls, its stout doors, and its great court-yards, resembled a fortress. As such it was intended to be, for here the cowardly Czar consoled himself with

the idea that his life would be safe. Built at immense expense, he watched this Palace of St. Michael, as it was called, grow foot by foot, now and then altering its plans as some new idea occurred to him for ensuring his safety from surprise and assassination.

Meantime his eccentricities and severities, against the result of which he strove to secure himself, were continued. Nay they were if possible increased when it was hinted to him that it was generally believed he was led by his wife and his mistress, who governed the empire in his name. A rumour more outrageous to his dignity and authority could not be imagined by the Czar, who on hearing it rolled his eyes in fury, breathed like a rhinoceros, and flung his arms about like a windmill. This report had been deliberately and maliciously set afloat by Count Rostopchin, who on being suddenly dismissed from his office as Minister of War, and succeeded in it by M. Nelidoff, a nephew of Paul's supposed mistress, believed that it was due to her influence and that of the Empress. To complete his revenge he managed to have introduced to the Czar's notice a young and pretty woman named Lapoukin, and to have it insinuated that if his Majesty made her his mistress, it could no longer be said that he was but a child in the hands of Mademoiselle Nelidoff and her friend the Czarina. Paul immediately grasped at this means of proving how little he was influenced by either ; and to make this yet

From a mezzotint, after a painting by G. Kugelyen.

THE EMPRESS ELIZABETH,
Wife of Alexander I.

more obvious he openly quarrelled with his consort; allowed Mademoiselle Nelidoff to leave the Court loudly protesting her contempt for himself; and showed such favour to his new mistress as to treat her to the sight of several reviews, in which he with his head held high, pranced about on a stately charger; he also commanded chivalrous plays to be performed for her instruction, when he conveyed to her the idea that he was really the hero; and on her mentioning one day that pale yellow was her favourite colour, he ordered that in future it should be worn by the ladies of the Court. After that none could dare to think he had been guided by his wife or his late mistress. It may be added that his new mistress rewarded the man to whom she owed her position, by having him appointed Minister of Foreign Affairs; while all the high functionaries who were known to be friends of the Empress, or whom she was suspected of favouring, were not only instantly dismissed from Court, but in many cases were banished to Moscow. The Czar's caprices now became more insupportable than ever. "All who approached the Court," says Prince Adam Czartoryski, "were in constant fear and uncertainty, being exposed at any moment to be addressed in the presence of the whole Court by the Court Marshal with some insulting message from the Emperor, and then to be sent into exile. It was like the reign of terror."

In the early months of 1801 the proud and powerful Russian nobles, who had writhed for four years under the sway of a tyrannical madman, determined to rid themselves of him. The chief movers in a conspiracy which had the sympathy of all were Count Panin and Count Pahlen. The former, a nephew of the minister who had been governor to the Grand Duke and who had predeceased Catherine, had been appointed Russian Minister to the Court of Berlin, from which he had been recalled by Paul, who made him a member of the Council of Foreign Affairs; for which he was eminently suited by training and ability, which were perhaps the causes that led to his sudden and unexplained dismissal and to his banishment to Moscow. His marriage with a member of the Orloff family may be considered as a link between two tragedies. Count Pahlen, one of the most able and astute men in Russia, was not only a member of the Council of Foreign Affairs, but held the important post of Governor of St. Petersburg, which gave him the direction and command of the garrison and of the police in the capital. Behind these were Plato Zubof, whom Paul had recalled to Russia, with his brothers Nicholas and Valerian; while behind them again stretched a mass of military men and nobles, all of whom detested their sovereign, and regarded him as a dangerous maniac.

As Counts Panin and Pahlen were shrewd, saga-

cious men, they foresaw their danger not only in case they failed to depose the Czar—which was all they intended to accomplish—but in case of success, if his successor were not consulted or implicated in their plot, and therefore prevented from punishing them, should he think himself justified in doing so. To break their plans to Alexander and gauge his feelings was their first care. It was not however easy to obtain a private interview with him in a Court crowded with spies, where the sight of two men talking apart was sufficient to arouse suspicion and probably cause their banishment. Eventually Pahlen succeeded in arranging that a meeting should take place in a bath between Alexander and Count Panin, just before the latter was ordered to Moscow. At this interview all his subtlety, his persuasiveness, his eloquence were brought to bear on the Grand Duke, who was naturally weak and yielding, and who without strength of character or power of determination, dreamt that under his rule humane treatment, civilisation, and liberty might be enjoyed by his subjects.

His own succession to the throne was an event to which he looked forward vaguely; for he had neither the ambition nor the desire to depose his father, whom he dreaded if not hated. To Panin's first statement that the whole empire suffered under its present sovereign, Alexander readily agreed. Capricious acts, deliberate cruelties, mistaken foreign policies, and

domestic tyrannies were touched upon ; and in a conversation that lasted over an hour it was pointed out that not merely millions of people all over the empire were at the mercy of one who seemed irresponsible for his acts, but also his wife, for whom he had conceived an insurmountable aversion which any day might lead to the most dreadful acts, and his family who had suffered from his unaccountable whims. To free Russia from the cloud of dread that hung above her, to relieve the Empress from insult and hatred, and to secure a tranquil and happy life to the Czar himself, it was necessary that Alexander should consent to his father's deposition.

But although he knew that the Emperor was plunging the internal arrangements of the country into chaos, and steering it politically towards inevitable disaster, yet Alexander, dreading responsibility, loving ease, and fearing his father, would not at first join or approve of any conspiracy that would change the sovereignty. On Count Panin being sent to Moscow, Count Pahlen took up the task of persuading Paul that it was his sacred duty to save his country from ruin, her people from tyranny ; until after months of enforcing this idea on him, Alexander at last agreed to countenance his father's dethronement, but not his murder, of which no intention was then entertained. Having implicated the heir to the throne in their plot, the conspirators felt their hands strengthened and their

lives secure. They therefore began to organise themselves and to decide on the manner in which their scheme should be carried out. Military officers not already of their number were made acquainted with their plans, which without an exception met with sympathy and approval. So universal was the hatred of Paul that no attempt was made of its concealment; it was, as Prince Adam Czartoryski says, "a state secret which was confided to all, and which no one betrayed, though the people lived under the most detested and the most suspicious of sovereigns, who encouraged espionage and spared no means of obtaining exact information not only of the actions but of the thoughts and intentions of his subjects."

For all that it seemed as if some inkling of this widespread conspiracy had reached the ears of the sovereign against whom it was directed; for one day in speaking to Count Pahlen, the Emperor fixing a penetrating look on him suddenly said, "I hear a conspiracy is being formed against me." Without losing countenance or showing concern, the Governor-General of St. Petersburg replied with smiling frankness, "Such a thing is impossible, sire. It could not be formed unless I belonged to it." For the present this assurance appeared to satisfy the Czar, who now entrenched in his fortified castle, believed himself perfectly safe and declared he had never felt happier or more at ease. A

little later a startling rumour was suddenly whispered among the conspirators, that in consequence of an anonymous letter he had received, Paul had sent to Moscow for the brutal and dreaded General Araktcheyeff, that he might replace as Governor-General of St. Petersburg Count Pahlen, without whom it was scarcely possible for the conspiracy to succeed. The arrival of this tyrannical official, who might at any hour of the next four and twenty reach the capital, would not only frustrate their scheme but probably be the cause of sending them to the block.

There was therefore not a moment to be lost in striking the blow which would fling their detested and maniacal Sovereign from his throne. It happened that at this date a number of high officials together with many generals and colonels had been summoned from the provinces to the capital by Paul, to take part in the ceremonies and entertainments which were to celebrate the marriage of his second daughter, the Grand Duchess Elena. As a great number of these were already in the secret of the conspiracy, their presence in St. Petersburg was considered a favourable opportunity by its promoters to effect their purpose. Accordingly on the evening of March 3rd, 1801, Plato Zubof gave a splendid supper to the military men and officials who were in the conspiracy, or who it was believed would approve

of and assist it. These numbered over a hundred and twenty.

Everything was done by the host to render his feast magnificent. The gold plate with which he had in happier days been presented by his Imperial mistress glittered under the pure light of hundreds of wax candles ; while a profusion of foreign dishes and rare wines regaled the guests who, excited, full of suspense, and more or less aware that they were to take part in a great event which was full of peril to themselves, drank freely as if to strengthen their courage and hide from their thoughts the result of possible failure. It was not until all had supped, until drink had inflamed their imaginations and loosened their tongues, until the servants had withdrawn and the doors were locked, that Plato Zubof, who had kept sober and strove to be calm, rose at the head of his table to address his guests.

Looking at their heated and eager faces while speaking in a voice that vibrated with the importance of his words, he pictured to them the reign of terror under which they lived. The country dear to them was threatened with ruin ; the advances she had made under the late sovereign had been checked ; Catherine's wise policies had been reversed. There was not one among them whose relatives or friends had not been unjustly punished for crimes of which they were ignorant ; there was scarce a family in the empire who

had had not one or more members sent into banishment. They themselves might at any day, at any hour, fall under the capricious tyranny of their Sovereign, whom he knew her late Majesty had not intended to succeed her, for whom she had always shown dislike, and whom, had she not been prevented by sudden death, she would have passed over in favour of the Grand Duke Alexander. He had only to add that anxious to rescue the empire from misfortune, and to save the people from further miseries, his Imperial Highness had agreed that it was necessary to depose his father, and to obtain from him a signature of abdication. On hearing that Alexander had approved of the dethronement of the Czar, not one of those who were not already in the conspiracy hesitated to join their more daring companions.

Amid the chink of glasses, the flow of wine, and the babel of voices, it was determined that they should that very night surprise the Emperor and force him to sign the deed of abdication which had already been drawn up. In the midst of this scene of tumult and confusion, a steady knocking at the door struck a note of alarm in those who knew their betrayal would mean death to them. When however the door was opened, infinite relief came at the sight of Count Pahlen, who only that moment had been able to escape from the duties which had kept him with his Majesty. An anxious crowd surrounding him to hear the latest

news from the palace, he told them that the Czar appeared to have no suspicion of the conspiracy, and had as usual said good-night to his sons and his wife, and gone quietly to bed.

Consultations followed while wine was drunk and protestations of courage made ; and it was eventually decided that at midnight two parties each numbering about sixty, Plato and Nicholas Zubof with General Bennigsen at the head of one, Count Pahlen at the head of the other, should approach the palace by different ways so that one of them should succeed in gaining an entrance. When they had heard the clocks all over the city strike twelve, they braced themselves for the task before them. Taking a dark lantern, Nicholas Zubof quietly led his party out of his brother's house, through the lonely streets, some of them following with unsteady footsteps, until they reached the vast silent Palace of St. Michael, dark and sombre as if prepared for the tragedy it was soon to witness. As aide-de-camp on daily duty there, he and his friends passed the sentries unchallenged ; and as the intricate passages leading to the Czar's bedroom were familiar to him, he took them direct to that apartment. On suddenly opening the door of the dressing-room connected with it they were startled to see that lights burned in it and that it was occupied by a young valet.

Seeing a body of men whose set, determined faces

and figures bent forward to seize, must have made known their purposes, he called aloud that they had come to kill the Emperor. To pounce upon, disable, and silence him was the work of a moment; but his crying in the night had startled and unnerved Plato Zubof, who believing the palace would be roused and they arrested, suggested that they should fly and save themselves. At that General Bennigsen, who by the way was a Hanoverian, seized him by the arm and holding him firmly told him he had gone too far to retreat, and that their greatest danger would lie in giving up their intention and in striving to escape from the vengeance of Paul. Saying this he entered the Emperor's bedroom to find it apparently empty. That the bed had just been vacated was evident from its appearance, and their first fear was that its late occupant had escaped them. Quickly and in agonies of suspense they took lights and hurriedly sought for the Czar under the bed, in cupboards, and around, until the scarce perceptible movement of a portière attracting them, it was hastily pulled aside to reveal a pitiful crouching figure in a nightshirt, whose limbs shook from terror and whose hideous face was distorted and ghastly.

At the alarm given by his valet he had rushed to the door of his wife's bedroom which communicated with his own, but which in his hatred of her he

had given orders should be locked and the key removed, and by which he had therefore been unable to escape and save his life. When dragged forward breathing heavily and rolling his eyes, he was almost paralysed with fear and made no attempt to resist, no effort to speak. Limp and crouching, this man who had no mercy on others and who was now more stricken with horror than any of his victims had been, was placed in a chair in front of which a desk was dragged forward. On this a paper was placed, while General Bennigsen said to the cowering Czar, "Sire, you are my prisoner, and have ceased to reign. You will now sign this deed of abdication in favour of your son the Grand Duke Alexander." The words appeared to have conveyed no meaning to Paul, who was still trembling and rolling his eyes in a horrible manner. A pen was put into his shaking hands and the place was pointed to him where he should write his name, but as he made an effort to obey cries were suddenly heard in the distance. Alarmed by these and not knowing if aid were being summoned to rescue the Emperor and arrest the conspirators, General Bennigsen hurried from the room to discover their cause.

His alarm was shared by those he had left behind, who dreading lest Paul might escape them and be enabled to send them to the block, determined to prevent such a possibility by murdering him. In the

hearts of one and all of them there was no other feeling for this abject wretch than detestation for the cruel persecutions their relatives or friends had suffered from him, and hatred for his despotism, his tyranny. Scarce therefore had General Bennigsen quitted them, than Nicholas Zubof clapped a heavy hand upon the Emperor's shoulder, at which one of his companions quickly undoing his official scarf, made a knot of it and slipped it round Paul's throat. It was only then with death in sight that the dull stupor of terror left him, and springing up he began to struggle and with both hands to tear the deadly scarf from his throat. His last moments were made more terrible from the fact that he believed he saw his second son Constantine among the savage faces crowding round and gloating over his death struggle, to whom he called out, "Mercy, your Highness, mercy, mercy! For God's sake, some air, some air!" these being the last words spoken by this fate-stricken man.

When General Bennigsen returned, he found the Emperor's dead body being buffeted and kicked by those whose fierce detestation of him survived his life. On the remains of one who but a day previously had exercised supreme power being saved from further desecration, his excited and exultant slayers, still far from sober, went into the neighbouring corridors and apartments shouting that "Paul was dead; Paul was

dead"; the surprise of which checked the joy it brought its hearers. It was not until then that Count Pahlen reached the palace with his followers, having lost his way, as he explained, in the garden. "It is said that he had delayed his arrival on purpose so as to be able to profess to have come to the Emperor's assistance in case his colleagues should have failed," says Prince Adam Czartoryski, who gives a detailed account of this terrible scene, which he received direct from General Bennigsen and others connected with the tragedy: an account supplemented and supported by that of M. de Langeson. On his arrival at the palace Count Pahlen took command and gave the necessary orders for the lying-in-state of the late Emperor and for the peaceful succession of his son.

As the latter knew that his father would on that night be surrounded by conspirators and forced to abdicate, he had on the Emperor bidding him good-night with the usual cold formality with which he had always treated his sons, retired to his own room where without undressing he dismissed his valet. He then sat down to await the news that must soon be brought him of the success or failure of the attempt to dethrone the Czar. In the whole empire at that moment there was no man more wretched than he who every minute expected to hear himself hailed as Sovereign of All the Russias. He who

detested cruelty, injustice, and despotism had either to continue to see these evils daily exercised over a helpless, suffering people, or consent to an act from which his conscience had shrunk, the usurpation of his father's throne. Weak and vacillating, he had for months hesitated between these alternatives ; but from the day he had allowed stronger men to influence his decision, his feeble mind had never ceased to reproach him. Now that the hour had come for the execution of the deed, he was tortured anew by misgivings, self-upbraidings, doubts of his own disinterestedness, all the subtle tauntings, the poignant suggestions that can make a man's mind a raging hell. Into its darkness there came no ray of light, no prospect of the ultimate enjoyment of what he placed above the wearing of a crown or the exercise of a sceptre, though it was within the reach of the humblest—peace, security, contentment.

As the night lengthened he rose and began to walk slowly up and down the room, pausing suddenly now and then as he imagined he heard some voice calling, some step approaching. But no sound reached him, the night was calm, the sky was clear, and from outward appearances none could judge that an action of incalculable importance not only to the empire of Russia, but to the whole continent of Europe was about to be taken. When at last midnight was slowly sounded by the clock in the

From a mezzotint, after a painting by G. Kugelyen.

THE EMPEROR ALEXANDER I.

fortress where so many victims of an insane tyrant were confined, Alexander knew that the decisive moment was at hand. But listen ever so attentively no sound came to him from the distant part of the palace where the Czar's apartments were situated, and the time seemed interminable before he was startled by the long-expected knock at his door. On springing forward to open it, he saw Nicholas Zubof with his eyes aflame, his face flushed from wine, his dress disordered, his whole appearance showing that he had taken part in a scene of confusion and riot. "It is all over," he said breathlessly.

In the second's pause that followed Alexander gave him a searching glance and then asked him what was all over. In the disconnected and muttered reply two words were caught, words that seemed to write themselves in letters of fire upon their hearer's brain : "Your Majesty." A question quickly put and answered revealed the tragedy that had taken place. At that a cloud fell upon Alexander's young life which never lifting in all the years to come, but deepening and darkening with each, surrounded and oppressed him. That he had though unwillingly, unknowingly, connived at his father's murder was a thought which never quitted him, never ceased to gnaw at his conscience. It was difficult to rouse him from the stupor into which he fell, to combat his shrinking repulsion to all connected with the tragedy, and

to oblige him to submit to the necessary acts in connection with his accession.

With his mother it was quite different. No sooner had news been brought to her in the dead of night that her husband had been barbarously strangled, than springing up and flinging a dressing-gown over her shoulders, she rushed out of her apartments to those where she saw a group of conspirators; when apparently without grief or horror, but with a sudden outburst of that burning ambition which Paul had always feared, she cried out to them, "As your Emperor has died a victim to treason, I am your Empress, I alone am your legitimate Sovereign; follow me and protect me." All stared unmoved at the tall stately figure of this half-clad and distraught lady, a parody on the heroic, and it was not without difficulty that General Bennigsen and Count Pahlen induced her to return to her rooms. She had not long been there when a fresh impulse to assert what she claimed as her rights seized her, but on attempting to leave her apartments she was prevented by the guards at the door. From there, however, she appealed to the soldiers in the passage who had been brought into the palace by the conspirators to keep order, assuring them that she alone was entitled to rule, that she was their lawful sovereign; news that was heard by these ungallant men not only without joy, but with ridicule, because of the poor lady's

imperfect knowledge of the Russian tongue and her strong German accent. At that she retired discomfited and regretful that she had allowed the desire of her life to become known, especially when it was not shared with the enthusiasm and gladness which her opinion of herself, and her belief in the appreciative character of the army had led her to expect.

The one man in the empire who could readily have saved the Czar from being strangled on the morning of March 4th, 1801, was he in whom above all others his Majesty had trusted and relied, and on whom he had heaped honours and wealth. This was the Turk Kutayschoff, whom it will be remembered he had raised from being his barber to be his Grand Equerry. Always indolent, loving pleasure, always hating and postponing business, he had thrust into his pockets without opening them some anonymous letters which bade him warn the Emperor of the attempt which would be made upon him on the night in question. When Kutayschoff opened the letters next day, fate had dealt the fatal blow to Paul. It may be added that on his death being officially announced, it was described as due to a fit of apoplexy; a statement which was credited by Western Europe for a considerable time.

Though horror-stricken by the deed, Alexander made no attempt to punish those guilty of his father's

murder. In the first place the names of those who had been its active perpetrators were kept a secret, though no very searching inquiry was made regarding them ; in the second place the large number and high positions of those engaged in the conspiracy protected them from banishment or disgrace had it been desired to take vengeance on them ; but above all Alexander considered himself among the guilty in having countenanced the conspiracy, though he had not foreseen what those more experienced and less optimistic must have anticipated as the sequel to Paul's deposition or to his refusal of that act. On the other hand the conspirators were not rewarded, though many of them considered that in having rid Russia of a tyrant they had done a service that should be met with recognition and gratitude. On this point the Zubofs were especially reproachful, bitterly regretting that Alexander had not "declared himself for his true friends," as the Empress Catherine had done in distinguishing those who had placed her on the throne. One by one the chiefs of the conspiracy were dismissed. Prince Adam Czartoryski tells us that all of them perished miserably.

Though Peter III., had he lived, would have repudiated Paul as his son, yet it will be seen that the greatest resemblance existed between their characters and their fate. Both were arrant cowards who hated their respective wives ; both had an absurd admiration

for the King of Prussia, and dressed in the Prussian uniform the soldiers whom they delighted to drill; both had lived for years as state prisoners, distrusted and disliked by the ruling Sovereign, whom in turn they disliked; while both were overtaken by a tragic death brought about in the same terrible manner.

THE END

Printed by Hazell, Watson & Viney, Ld., London and Aylesbury.

LIBRARY - MINNEAPOLIS 4, MINN.